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California Horticulture Oral History Series

Toichi Domoto

A JAPANESE-AMERICAN NURSERYMAN'S LIFE IN CALIFORNIA:
FLORICULTURE AND FAMILY, 1883-1992

With Introductions by
Julius Nuccio
and
Ernest Wertheim

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1992

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INTRODUCTION--by Julius Nuccio

The privilege and honor to introduce Mr. Toichi Domoto is a task I thought would be quite simple. After all, I've known him most of my life, as a fellow nurseryman, as a plantsman, as a great friend, and as a competitor. Although competitor is not the proper word for Toichi because he was always as contributor, never a competitor.

The fact that Toichi has always been the same steady, quiet, humble person, but with strong opinions of plant evaluation, and never controversial, is what makes this a difficult introduction.

I have nothing but good to say about him. He brought to the nursery industry integrity and a continued search for new and better varieties with honest evaluations.

I first met Toichi in the late 1930s. I had experienced several years of working in a full-line nursery and soon found myself hooked on the two greatest flowering shrubs on the earth, the camellia and the azalea.

Camellia popularity was just coming in to a new, lively market with many interested gardeners and camellia hobbyists, all searching for new and better varieties. The availability of varieties was quite limited; hence, my first trip to Hayward, California and business with Toichi Domoto. At that time he was the leader in available stock as well as varieties and, of course, knowledge of both the camellia and azalea.

This man was open, with no secrets, and shared his knowledge and made many varieties available. I couldn't believe his sincerity, and the humility that has been his trait all the many years of our friendship.

The demand for camellias of new and better varieties grew so rapidly that it created thirty or more camellia specialty nurseries in the southern California area alone, and many throughout the entire state.

The race was truly on, and Toichi was ready with stock and an established nursery. However, along came Pearl Harbor--that's right, he was interned. I couldn't believe it!

These were very difficult years for Americans of Japanese descent, especially those with established businesses such as Toichi. His lost business opportunities because of the war were truly tragic.

Toichi never wavered, even though being interned only proved to be half the battle. Upon his return at war's end he found that many in the

industry continued to discriminate against the Japanese Americans, hoping to keep them out of competition. This, too, was very hard to believe.

It was in these early years after the war that I realized what a great and sincere friend this man was. We, at Nuccio's, were able to get back into the camellia world, but not so for Toichi.

Toichi called me one day in 1948. In order to get back in the race he wanted to know if we would supply him with some of the newer varieties. Of course, our answer was that we would be more than happy to. Upon completion of the order he said that his truck would pick up the plants at 6 a.m. This was fine, but then I wondered why such an early hour. Toichi gave us several such orders, and each time the truck arrived at 6 a.m. for pick-up.

Finally, I asked him why the early pick-up. His reply was that he didn't want anyone to see a Japanese in our nursery for fear of hurting our business. This respect and consideration for others was always a trait of Toichi.

Needless to say, this man was soon back in the competition, and contributing to the world of camellias new varieties such as Ecclefield, Destiny, Scented Gem, and Shiro Chan, to name a few.

Shiro Chan was and is, without a doubt, one of the finest mutations ever developed. His testing of this camellia and preparation for distribution was truly outstanding.

Along with his own introductions, Toichi's distribution and confidence in the sasanqua camellia must be told. He was one of the first to predict that some day the gardeners of America would benefit from the great fall color and versatility of this camellia species.

It has taken years, but today the sasanqua is accepted as one of our finest flowering evergreen shrubs. The varieties that Toichi valued highly many years ago are still the most popular today. To name a few: Hana Jiman, Hiryu, Momozono Nishiki, Narumigata, Nodami Ushiro, Setsugekka, Shinonome, Shishi Gashira, Show no Sakae, White Doves, and Yae Arare.

It should be obvious that our relationship grew well beyond fellow nurserymen and good friends. We became interested in each other's families and their futures. At each one of our meetings over the years, regardless of business, the conversation always was, "How are the kids?" This is where Toichi's life took another turn: his children chose different roads and are doing very well. Mine stayed to carry on the nursery business.

A nursery that produces and introduces new varieties should be family-oriented to be successful, and Toichi, with all his wisdom and knowledge, knew this. He realized that if he sold the nursery the Domoto tradition would no longer be and he would certainly not be happy away from what he has loved all his life. Hence, his decision to phase out his stock to a comfortable size that he could be relaxed in. In doing so he has given the young people at Nuccio's all of his selected seedlings for them to evaluate and market.

In the early years of his phasing-out program, the 1970s, he sent us two fine selected seedlings. One was a hybrid cuspidata, and the other a sasanqua, Shishi Gashira seedling. In our testing it was quite obvious that both would be great new varieties and should be named and marketed.

I called Toichi and told him that he had two fine camellias and that he should name them. I suggested to him that the boys at the nursery felt that his name would be perfect for either one, as they both represented excellent qualities that he always strived for. His answer was firm: he did not want his name used, and to tell the boys that whatever name they decided on, other than his, would be fine.

The cuspidata hybrid was named Spring Festival, and the sasanqua, Dwarf Shishi. Both have been marketed and have won acclaim all over the camellia world. They represent what Toichi worked for, excellent landscape plants for the gardens.

At this time many of Toichi's seedlings are being propagated for future introductions. His nursery has phased down considerably, but not the man. His interests are still high for the new varieties.

Recently we received another group of his seedlings for testing, and know from his track record that they will all have merit.

Hopefully I have conveyed to the reader my feelings of respect and admiration for Toichi Domoto, and his contribution to the horticultural and nursery industries.

Julius Nuccio
Nuccio's Nurseries

January 9, 1993
Altadena, California

INTRODUCTION--by Ernest Wertheim

It has been fifty-four years to the month that I was invited to attend my first meeting of the California Horticultural Society. I had arrived in San Francisco from Berlin two weeks earlier, via bus from Philadelphia--the job as a landscape architect I was offered at Swarthmore College would not materialize until spring and I could not afford to wait--and I had just been employed on the Atherton estate of Mrs. Sigmund Stern as "one of the three Mexicans to spade the estate."

My first meeting of the California Horticultural Society is as fresh in my mind as if it were yesterday: members were coming in, some bringing beautiful specimens from their gardens or nurseries. Everything was displayed in containers with proper botanical names and the names of the exhibitors.

Following a lecture there was an intermission during which I was introduced to persons such as Sydney Mitchell, the first president of Cal Hort, Victor Reiter, W. B. Clarke, William Schmidt, Bob Sachs--a postal service employee whose interest was primroses--and many other wonderful people.

The second part of the evening was devoted to a discussion of selected items from the large display brought in by members. That was when I first saw Toichi Domoto, who discussed the new flowering quince hybrids, the most memorable of which was 'Sunset'. Toichi was reserved in his presentation, but very clear about the information he gave to the members. Although we did not meet in person during that meeting, my interest in Toichi was sparked.

During subsequent Cal Hort meetings we did speak to one another, and I found that not only was Toichi a wonderful person, but also an excellent horticulturist, a very good listener, and a person who only spoke out when he really knew what he was talking about. The highlights of my life in 1939, 1940, and 1941 were attending meetings of the Cal Hort Society where I could listen to experts share their knowledge, and Toichi was one of those people who made it most worthwhile to attend the meetings.

During the first year of our acquaintance my only transportation was a bicycle, so it wasn't until I had a car of my own that I could finally go to Hayward on a regular basis to visit Toichi and see his plants. After establishing my own office of landscape architecture I became a regular customer of his.

In the years prior to the war there weren't many landscape architects in northern California; it was just the end of the Depression, and landscape architecture was not known to the average homeowner, nor was transportation what it is today. Few people, including landscape architects, were aware of the plant material Toichi was introducing to California, and the plants and specimens available in his nursery.

December 7, 1941 changed the lives of many Americans, including Toichi. My life as a landscape architect came to an abrupt halt when I was inducted into the U.S. Army, where I served for four years as an intelligence officer under General MacArthur. The Japanese became our enemies, and it was natural for servicemen to develop a hatred and fear of the enemy. When I returned to my wife in San Francisco at the end of the war I harbored this anti-Japanese feeling, although I had been brought up to see people as individuals and not group them together.

Not long after my return, and the re-establishment of my landscape architectural practice, I received a call from Toichi, who asked if I would assist him with the design of the landscape for the First Congregational Church in Hayward. I was most impressed that this man who, with so many other Japanese Americans, had been so mistreated during the war years, had the heart to forgive and offer his services to his church.

I did assist Toichi, and working with him gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate my experiences in the Southwest Pacific; I soon recognized that the feelings I had while serving in the army needed to be forgotten--they didn't belong on the shores of the United States. I am grateful to Toichi for providing me with the opportunity to refresh my feelings, and it was a great pleasure to work with him on the church landscape design.

Toichi and I both served on the board of directors of the California Horticultural Society for many years. In 1957 Toichi was elected president. I served as his vice president, and during that year we worked very closely together and developed a lasting friendship. Toichi initiated informal gatherings after each meeting, which were originally held in my home. We invited old-timers, new members, and the speaker of the evening, and my wife served coffee, tea, and wonderful pastry--those were the years when we didn't know about cholesterol, calories, and fat. During those gatherings everyone became better acquainted, and a great bond developed. Although Toichi had a long drive home to Hayward, he always came to the gatherings and helped to make the evening an unforgettable experience for all.

There was another personality, Eric Walther, director of the Strybing Arboretum, who at times came to our evening gatherings. Mr. Walther was a walking encyclopedia, and Toichi, Roy Hudson, director of

Golden Gate Park, and San Francisco nurseryman Victor Reiter would enter into great discussions on new introductions, on how to propagate, and on how to use such plants in gardens and parks. Although Roy, Eric, and Victor were San Francisco residents, Toichi hailed from Hayward where there were very different climatic conditions. Perhaps because of his location, Toichi was much more tuned to the climate of the total Bay Area; he always had good information on whether a plant would survive the heat of Walnut Creek or San Jose, or the cold of Lafayette or San Rafael, or the wind in Point Reyes or Half Moon Bay.

The California Horticultural Society used to have an exhibit in the Oakland Spring Garden Show and Toichi generously contributed specimen plants. I can recall one evening, the night before the grand opening, when we were short of help due to the illness of some committee members, and there came Toichi, on very short notice, to work with us a good part of the night setting up the exhibit.

Toichi introduced many varieties of Acer palmatum, which I regularly used in my landscape designs. Because most Acer palmatums would not tolerate the heat or wind in places like Walnut Creek or San Rafael, he specifically grew multi-trunk Acer truncatums for me. A. truncatum, which resembles an A. palmatum, grows well in places like Sacramento and Chico and will take the heat and wind, but it becomes a large tree. By pruning the A. truncatums at an early stage to create multi-trunks, Toichi made it possible to keep the tree to a height of about ten feet, and a wonderful sculptural effect could be created when the inside was opened to view by additional proper pruning.

Toichi had many sources throughout the world, particularly in Japan, and he continuously imported plants. One such plant was a Viburnum japonicum. However, in other California nurseries a different Viburnum was sold under this same name. For ease of our identification Toichi and I called his V. japonicum var. 'Domoto'. Toichi's viburnum had a lovely leathery, deep green foliage and fragrant white blossoms, while the other had shiny light green leaves. To clear up the confusion, botanist Dr. Elizabeth McClintock made a study of viburnums and concluded that Toichi's Viburnum was V. japonicum, while the others on the market were mislabeled.

For the annual dinners of the California Horticultural Society, Toichi would bring many cut camellias to be used to decorate the many tables. It was Toichi who introduced us to Camellia reticulata, and the first hybrids that entered the market.

I learned from Toichi how to grow his gerbera hybrids successfully in the garden, and which tree peony to use as a specimen plant. He also introduced me to Azalea 'Snowbird', a vigorous white azalea that in my experience always blooms in April at the same time as Azalea 'Ward's

Ruby'. The lower A. 'Ward's Ruby', which is red, looks very effective with A. 'Snowbird' used as a background.

At one time Toichi was asked by Mrs. Roth to help her with a flower show at her estate, Filoli. He asked me to assist him, and we visited Mrs. Roth several times--what a lovely lady, and so well versed in art and horticulture! As a result of these visits, Toichi and I felt there was a real need to preserve the Filoli estate for future generations. We were the first persons to openly discuss the subject with Mrs. Roth. There were discussions about establishing a southern branch of the Strybing Arboretum and several other ideas. The final result was that the gardens have become a part of the National Trust. Credit for initiating the idea to preserve the beautiful gardens must go to Toichi Domoto. Obviously others did a lot of work, but Toichi was responsible for the basic concept and for first approaching Mrs. Roth many years ago.

In the late fifties my office became known for designing garden centers, and Toichi approached my partner and me to ask if we could assist him with the creation of an enclosed sales area for bonsai plants, pots, and accessories. The time spent planning his rather small facility was precious. It was a real pleasure to work with Toichi; he listened to our proposals, carefully evaluated them, and then introduced his own thoughts in a kind but precise manner.

In 1962 the California Horticultural Society recognized the many contributions made by Toichi and awarded him their annual award. In the July 1962 Cal Hort Journal Victor Reiter wrote an article covering the award titled "A Tribute to Toichi Domoto." Another article was written in the July 1969 Cal Hort Journal by William Schmidt, "Toichi Domoto, Nurseryman, Over Sixty Years Experience with Flowers." These are only a few of the recognitions that Toichi has received, and I'm sure that there are many more laurels he could be given for his generosity in sharing his experience and knowledge, and his kindness.

During the eighties it became difficult for Toichi to attend California Horticultural Society meetings, and I suddenly realized that the younger generation was missing out in not knowing this fine man. I approached Tom Bass, at that time the president of Cal Hort, and suggested that we have a field trip to the Domoto Nursery and call it A Visit with Toichi. We then drove to Hayward to propose our idea to Toichi, who agreed to let members of Cal Hort visit him on a Saturday. What a wonderful visit we had that day! We all brought our brown-bag lunches, the older members had a chance to see him again, and the younger members had the opportunity to meet and talk with the man who had been in horticulture for over seventy years.

There are many past experiences that I have shared with this wonderful man during the past fifty-three years, most recently our chat

in December 1992 when we reminisced about past times. I would like to take this moment to say how privileged I feel to be asked to write this introduction, and I hope I will see Toichi continuing to enjoy his work with plants, particularly bonsai, for many years to come.

Ernest Wertheim, ASLA
Wertheim, Van der Ploeg & Klemeyer

February 22, 1992
San Francisco, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Suzanne Riess

The California Association of Nurserymen in 1970 honored Toichi Domoto with their Pacific Coast Nurseryman Award, the highest recognition given for an individual's contribution to horticulture and the nursery industry. He was the first nurseryman of Japanese descent to be so honored in the twenty-two year history of the distinguished award. Owner of Domoto's Nursery, a combination retail and production nursery that provided plants for many of the area's most illustrious gardens, Toichi Domoto had achieved fame for his introduction of tree peonies, camellias, gerberas, fuchsias, trailing azaleas, and many other plant varieties. He was active in his profession, a past-president of the California Horticultural Society, and winner as well of that group's highest award.

The Domoto name in the nursery business, starting with Mr. Domoto's father, Kanetaro Domoto, has for over one hundred years been associated with excellent plant introductions, selected and hybridized and made available to a grateful trade. Today at age ninety-one Toichi Domoto lives quietly on the nursery land that he purchased in Hayward, California in 1927 when he was a twenty-five year old, newly out of college and going into business for himself. Though the gates to the Domoto Nursery still swing open at 9 a.m. for the occasional determined customer, and welcome visitor, Mr. Domoto has been retired from business for many years. His day now is organized around supervising a last few employees, studying and tending his bonsai collection, reflecting on the news of the world, sharing what he knows with the next generations, and serving as a constant lodestar for family and friends.

Toichi Domoto was born in Oakland, California in 1902, the first son of Kanetaro Domoto, who emigrated to this country in 1882. He grew up, one of thirteen children born to Teru Morita Domoto, in an Oakland that would be unrecognizable to residents now, known by district names vanished into history. Domoto Brothers greenhouses spread over forty-eight acres in the Fitchburg district. The nursery had a fine reputation, and a name as "Domoto College" because of the horticultural education and experience and start in life it gave to sons of Japanese and Japanese-American families. Toichi's father was known in the business as "Tom" Domoto, typical of the practice at that time of "simplifying" Japanese names by changing them.

Young Toichi grew up in the family nursery, very aware of and involved in his surroundings--his first education. His formal education was inaugurated in Oakland schools that served a remarkably heterogeneous population. For this Issei son, school was a chance to excel, and a place to shape a sense of himself. He felt different and separate, isolated sometimes, called names sometimes, but he was never diminished.

He entered Stanford University in 1921 where he enjoyed life in the Japanese student house on campus, took a general course, manned the rooting section at football games, and was consummately collegiate.

Then in 1923 Toichi Domoto transferred from Stanford to the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The floriculture program at Illinois was one of the best, and it was a logical change. Toichi needed to get training in a field where work would be possible, and mechanical engineering, his first choice, was unlikely to offer promising jobs to a Japanese American. At Illinois he joined the Cosmopolitan Club, and while those associations did not prepare him for the experiences of prejudice that were ahead, the group gave him freedom to grow, more good college years to enjoy, and more memories of banquets and football games and rallies and collegiate traditions.

The new graduate came home from Illinois in February 1926 after a train tour to the East Coast where he posed in front of Niagara Falls. That was to be the last time he would be so far from home. Back in California, Toichi bought twenty-six acres in Hayward and opened his nursery business, first specializing in camellias. He soon was working with tree peonies, and in a photograph in the oral history he is shown standing proudly in his blooming fields. This was the 1930s, and while the business was a success, new demands were being made of Toichi. In the oral history he explains his responsibility to his family, undertaking that each sibling should have the opportunity for a good education. The burden of that financial responsibility, discriminatory land laws, the Great Depression and Domoto Brothers foreclosure, and in 1941 the shock of the relocation of American citizens of Japanese ancestry, followed in what seems, looking back, to be rapid succession.

Toichi Domoto had married Alice Okamoto in 1940, and their two children were born in the war and relocation years. The family returned to Hayward in 1946. In 1991 one of the Domotos' three granddaughters wrote lovingly about her grandfather in a college essay. She said, "My grandfather has the most admirable spirit I have ever felt. He has a wisdom...from a lifetime's growth through innocence, loss, perseverance, betrayal, loneliness, love, hard work, and joy... He is able to reach beyond himself to see that he has not been alone in life's struggles. He is sympathetic and open to others' experiences. He gives the respect to others' differences that he learned to appreciate from his life as a Japanese boy and man who was abused by prejudice."

In 1992, with the news that an oral memoir with Toichi was proposed, the nursery community's admiration and affection for Toichi Domoto was equally clear. Friends in garden groups, in professional nursery associations, in horticultural societies, knew how they had benefitted from Toichi's plant introductions, and his expertise in floriculture--and from knowing him. Toichi Domoto dealt as sensitively with his fellow man as he ever did with a rare and tender cutting. Careful not to offend or

presume, he learned to create an atmosphere where ignorance and prejudice dissolved in the face of decency.

In 1981 and in 1987 Toichi Domoto had been interviewed briefly by the Regional Oral History Office. The focus in 1981 was on his recollections of Lurline Matson Roth, the owner and dedicated gardener of Filoli, in Woodside, California [now in the National Trust for Historic Preservation]. In 1987, when doing the Blake Estate oral history, we turned again to Mr. Domoto for his memories of Anita Blake and her sister Mabel Symmes. In this current 1992 oral history, which includes in the appendices the 1981 and 1987 interviews, we have reached for a wider scope than the previous two interviews. As the interviewer in California horticultural history for the office, it was my privilege to work with Mr. Domoto on these three assignments.

I was happy to be back at the nursery on July 22, 1992 for the first of eight interviews. Mr. Domoto led the way out to the enclosed porch, and we sat down at a table, in front of three delightful bonsai plants. For the next interview sessions, the pattern was the same. Monday mornings at 9 a.m. Mr. Domoto would greet me, we would talk about whatever beautiful small plant was on show, and then we would interview. The sessions were two hours long. As persimmon season came along I accepted Mr. Domoto's invitation to climb aboard his electric car for a tour around the nursery, and a stop by the cold storage to box up a generous supply of persimmons, the beautiful fruit very much associated with Domoto Brothers in its earlier days.

Because of difficulties in Mr. Domoto's speech due to a stroke in recent years, the taped interviews in some places presented a challenge to the transcriber. And because Mr. Domoto's vision is deteriorated, and he could not undertake the usual step of the interviewee reading and reviewing the oral history, I read the transcript back to him, questioning for clarification, and incorporating in the text his additions and corrections. If errors of fact appear in the volume that follows they are likely due to the less-than-ideal circumstance of the interviewee being unable to give a detailed visual review of his memoir.

In the essay mentioned above, Mr. Domoto's granddaughter describes her grandfather's day. "Every morning at five a.m. Toichi patiently gets dressed, picks up his cane, and walks to his office... He walks through the dew on the morning grass and scattered leaves as birds are singing and flying to and from the hundreds of trees that fill the nursery, while an occasional cat watches or follows him from behind... he reads the newspaper and bonsai magazines with a giant magnifying glass, naps, checks on the health of his plants, and feeds the stray cats that the neighboring apartment tenants have thrown over the nursery fence... The busy days of the once twenty-six acre nursery are now over..."

But good friends remain, and visitors stop by, and calls come in for advice on the subjects Toichi knows best. Every time I visited Toichi Domoto, to interview, to read back the transcript, and most recently to borrow material to illustrate the oral history, I found myself in the disconcerting position of learning about an aspect of his work--some plant introduction or some act of unsung generosity--that was not pursued on tape. When I marveled at the magnitude and scope of his knowledge he said how fortunate he was that instead of just doing one thing in his chosen field of floriculture, conditions necessitated that he had to "travel with the times." Such a positive view of being forced to change by what were often far from ideal circumstances!

The Regional Oral History Office is fortunate to have had the help of landscape architect Mai Arbogast in convincing Toichi Domoto that it was important to do the full memoir. In addition to Mai's help as advocate for the Office--a role she also played for the Roth-Filoli oral history--Ed Carmen of Carmen's Nursery in Los Altos was essential to the success of this undertaking. Strongly behind having an oral history done with Mr. Domoto--he knew about the oral history office because of the series of interviews completed in the California Horticulture Oral History Series with Owen Pearce, Gerda Isenberg, Adele and Lewis Lawyer, and Wayne Roderick--Mr. Carmen was a most effective fund-raiser. He knew who to ask, and how. Our thanks, and Mr. Domoto's, to Ed and to Mai.

Julius Nuccio, of Nuccio's Nursery, Altadena, California, and Ernest Wertheim, landscape architect, both expressed how honored they were to be asked to write introductions to their friend Toichi Domoto. Thanks also to Barbara Pitschel at the Helen Crocker Russell Library of Strybing Arboretum for her research help, to Lucy Tolmach at Filoli for providing the comprehensive list of Domoto plants at Filoli, and to Jim Kantor, University Archivist emeritus, for his volunteer proofreading of the volume. The Regional Oral History Office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, and is an administrative division of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer/Editor

April 21, 1993
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

I FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

[Interview 1: July 22, 1992] ##¹

Riess: You were born in 1902. Were you born at home?

Domoto: Yes. I was born on December 11, 1902, in Oakland, on what used to be called Central Avenue, and it is now 55th Avenue, near East 14th Street. My mother told me that I was born exactly at twelve o'clock noon, because there used to be a fuse manufacturing company in Fitchburg [the Fitchburg district of Oakland] in those days, that used to have a factory. Their whistle would blow at noon--and at morning and night. I was born just as the whistle blew, so I even know my exact time of birth.

Riess: Did your mother have a doctor in attendance?

Domoto: I think the birth certificate had a doctor's name on it, but in those days, I'm not sure whether she had a midwife or the doctor. Probably the midwife was there, but the doctor's name is on the birth certificate.

Riess: Did your mother help your father in the business?

Domoto: Not directly. She came from Japan in--I'm not sure just what year, but my father went back and they were married in Japan, and then came over. I think it was 1901 or so. She never went back to Japan.

Riess: Was that something that she talked about, that she was sad about?

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape segment has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 250.

Domoto: Yes. At one time, she always had hopes of going back and seeing the folks. Much later, she said, "I have no desire to go back there." The friends she knew and the relatives she wanted to see were gone, so no sense in going back any more. So she never got to go back.

We had a big family. I think there were--must have been either ten or eleven of us children, almost year by year, that many. So she never got a chance to go back, and then the war--.

Riess: You had many sisters, didn't you?

Domoto: Yes. Only one brother still alive. I think I had one brother born and died in infancy.

Riess: Was that typical, that a Japanese family would be so large?

Domoto: Not all, but most of the earlier Japanese families--maybe not as large as ours, but all had more than one or two children. If they didn't have children, it was thought there was something wrong. It's like your first generation Europeans, Italians, they all had big families.

Riess: Because they wanted to place themselves on the land?

Domoto: No, it wasn't that. I think, as we look back on it now, we know about birth control, but those days, they didn't know anything about birth control.

Riess: And then your father's brother, did he have a large family also?

Domoto: Yes. At least three of his five brothers all had good-sized families.

Riess: Henry is the name of the brother who was in the business with your father?

Domoto: Yes. He was a younger brother, and he was in charge of the more or less merchandising of the cut flowers side in San Francisco, the flower market side.

Riess: When did they learn to speak English?

Domoto: I don't know about my uncles, but my father and his older brother, they spoke very little English when they came here. I guess they were taught by some missionary in Japan before they came, but see, they came at quite a young age. My dad was I think only sixteen when he came. His older brother, maybe a year or two older. Then they learned in school; I think it was some person they worked

with that taught them, probably a missionary. But I know that whatever English they picked up would be here in the States and not in Japan, because they were over here at too young an age to have any teaching in Japan.

Riess: Did your father talk much about his childhood in Japan?

Domoto: Little, which was typical of most of the first generation. Now, I hear from several of the second and third generation Japanese that they have little knowledge of their family history. Some of them don't even know what area their parents came from. They know they came from Japan, but outside of that, they don't know.

Riess: Why do you think that they were so quiet about the past?

Domoto: Looking back now, I think it's mostly they were too busy trying to make a living, and had no time to talk to the youngsters. The curiosity wasn't there. And then especially if they were into the agricultural side, they were out in the country. You see, in the cities, where they had a settlement of Japanese, some of them might ask, "What Ken"--a Ken is a state in Japan--"did you come from?" But otherwise, there was very little history written about the family tree.

Although, some of the older families in those days, if a child was born here in the States, they were supposed to report their birth to the Japanese Consulate, and then they [the consulate] would register the birth in Japan in the village where they came from, in their records. There's a period when the second generation of Japanese, I think after the age of seventeen and before they were twenty-one, had to denounce their allegiance to Japan, and we had documents sent to erase the registry in Japan. That's why, in some of the history, you'll see mention about "dual citizenship." But in many cases the second generation didn't even know they had dual citizenship.

Riess: At what point were you advised to do that, to renounce?

Domoto: I think it was previous to the Alien Land Law.

Riess: Do you think that your father came to this country expecting eventually to return to Japan?

Domoto: I'm not sure. Most of the first generation of that period all had dreams of making enough money to return to Japan, or the home country. But as they kept working and establishing, families were born here, and it made it harder and harder to go back. Some of them went back, and if they had families here already, they'd come back again.

Particularly I remember my in-laws, my wife's mother and father, at the time of the exposition in Japan--that was '40, '41 or something--their sons and daughters got some money together and told them to take a trip to Japan and see Japan. It was the first time that her father had been there in fifty years. Her mother had been back once or twice before. But they went there, and I think at that time they planned for them to stay past the New Year period, so they could enjoy the New Year and then come back. But before that [New Year], they phoned and said, "He's coming back." His daughter said, "Hey, Dad, we gave you the money to go and enjoy yourself over there." They insisted that he stay until after the New Year.

The first thing we knew, we had a phone call from the airport, "Come and get me." Afterwards, "Why did you come back?" Well, you see, after fifty years, the people that he knew there, they had either gone or--he had nothing in common with the people, even relatives. His family and his friends are all over here, so they came back. That's the story of a lot of the first generation.

In another instance--this was mostly the families I knew around the Bay--they had taken their, I think, two daughters back to Japan on a visit to see Japan. When they arrived in Japan, and looked around, pretty soon the daughters said, "Hey, when are we going to Japan?" They were in Japan. They said, "No, this isn't Japan. This is too dirty." They expected what they saw in the picture postcards, and what their mothers had told them, how beautiful it was. But get into a seaport town, you know, and youngsters, they felt it was just dirty, and they wanted to come home right away. [laughs]

And I think that's true--. At that time there used to be some Italians from the first generation in the flower business, and Germans I used to know, we would get talking. I think they thought that way pretty much in common with the other nationals.

Riess: Because when their parents talked about these places, they romanticized their memories?

Domoto: Yes. And pictures, postcards, of like Fujiama or some shrine or something, they are really beautiful. Then when you arrive in a seaport, you go into the worst part of the city. Even on American railroads, you go into a big city, the railroads used to go into the poorest part, like New York. And Chicago, you go into a stockyard area. In San Francisco it used to be South San Francisco or Oakland--the poorest part, not very beautiful to look at.

II THE NURSERY BUSINESS, DOMOTO BROTHERS, INC.

Quarantine 37

Riess: When did you first go to Japan?

Domoto: Never been there.

Riess: Have you come close?

Domoto: No. The furthest I've been out is a trip out to the Farallones.
[laughter]

It's probably the way the nursery industry developed. If it wasn't for Quarantine 37, which stopped importing of plants from all over--not just from Japan, but all over--for propagating purposes, to prevent disease and insects from coming in, I might have been inclined to go. But that stopped all chance of importing, because my father's business was started mainly in importing plants from Japan.

Riess: In unlimited quantities?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: To sell directly from that stock?

Domoto: Yes, from the stock that came in, or they would take import orders and bring them in. The shipment wasn't year-round; it was generally through fall and early spring, when the plants were dormant.

Riess: He must have needed a huge nursery to accommodate these grown plants.

Domoto: The nursery on Central Avenue in Oakland, as I remember, the plants would come in in big crates, and we would unpack them, and sell the plants. The plants that came in from Japan at that time --the ones I remember as coming in in quantity were camellias, daphne, aspidistra, those were the main things. Then later, the fruit and nut trees from Japan. Some of the first persimmon trees and Japanese pear, summer plums. And chestnuts.

Riess: Would people buy those trees as ornamental trees?

Domoto: No, no. He was importing those mostly for not directly retail, very little retail. Most of them were sold to other nurseries in California for planting. One of the older nurseries was up in Newcastle, California, the Silva Bergholdt, they were fruit tree growers mainly. Then they were distributed through there.

Riess: This would be two-year-old stock?

Domoto: I guess it would probably be--we used to call it two-year, bare-root trees. They'd come in boxes, about three by three by six or seven feet. Those boxes, they used to be called ton baku. Ton baku, I guess it was more or less equivalent to our one ton, and baku means box. Since they came by boat, that was the unit of measurement for charging the freight. If it was heavy, they'd weigh it. If it was light, they'd be charged by the cubic feet.

Riess: And it was spelled t-o-n as in ton?

Domoto: As I remember.

Riess: This sounds like one of those interesting examples of the Japanese-English mixed word.

Domoto: Yes, where they kind of went together. Whether there is a term for Japanese meaning ton--. I remember over the years when they talk about it, and then learning what the cubic measurement was, I understand that that was the way they determined it. The combination of English and Japanese together.

Tom Domoto's Start in San Francisco

Riess: Had your father made connections in the nursery business back in Japan when he was younger than sixteen?

Domoto: No, no.

Riess: So how did he develop these connections?

Domoto: Mostly through correspondence with nurserymen in Japan.

Riess: Can you imagine how he decided--I mean, to start in a business when you're sixteen is pretty impressive.

Domoto: Probably because he came from an agricultural family. The older brother who came from Japan with him at the time, he was more interested in the business side. Eventually he went into the importing and exporting of Japanese goods, provisions and so forth. My father and his younger brothers, they came over later, and decided to go into the flower business.

Riess: The older brother led the way.

Domoto: My father did, as far as the nursery business.

Riess: But in terms of coming to this country.

Domoto: No, my father came with his older brother, because when they left for America, he felt that just going by himself wasn't safe, so my father came along with him.

I think he was only sixteen when he came. And then the only work--. I know they were working either as houseboys, or I think they did some work for the old Palace Hotel in those days. And then Dad started doing gardening work for the Sutro family out near the Cliff House, where they had a big home and garden. He started taking care of the garden there.

Riess: Did he live with that family?

Domoto: No. They had a cottage place for the workers there.

One of the instances that he remembered--I guess they had to do their own cooking, and one of the instances I remember him telling about, they used to like to cook pork chops. And the son --I don't know, being Jewish, they're not supposed to eat pork, but he liked the taste. He would come over and eat. Dad said he used to give him some cash and tell him, "Next time you buy some mutton, buy me a couple of pork chops," and then he would come down and eat with them. [laughter]

Those are some more of the familiar items that Dad mentioned. I guess it's true, because several years later one of the sons came out to buy some plants from me. We started talking, and he said, "Yes, I'm the one that used to enjoy the 'lamb' chops." [laughter]

I guess he [that son] was kind of a rascal. He used to do certain things around the garden that you're not supposed to do. He said he remembered my dad turning him over his knee and spanking him. [laughs] Not hard, but corporal punishment!

Riess: Your dad wasn't that much older, either.

Domoto: No. He was then probably--must have been about eighteen, nineteen.

Riess: There was an example where he would pick up English, just talking to a young boy.

Domoto: Yes. And some of the family he worked with, they would teach him English. Then I think the Salvation Army might have had some influence in teaching, because he was always very generous in giving a donation whenever anyone came around for the Salvation Army. He never said anything about it, but I think that's where he learned some.

Riess: And they had missions, didn't they?

Domoto: Yes, missionaries, yes. And they may have had some little training in the missionary schools in Japan. Very little, though. When he was sixteen--you're not much into other things. So we know very little about the early family history.

Riess: Did your father keep the patronage of the Sutro family? Did he keep up that connection?

Domoto: Yes. The Sutro family, and in Oakland the Chabots. And one of the older fruit merchants, he talked about--I think the name must have been Jacobson, but he used to call him Jacoby.

Riess: Do you know whether any of those families were still around and were able to be helpful during the relocation period?

Domoto: Oh, no. No, the second and third generations, the younger children were [around], but as far as any help that way, I don't think so.

Riess: The connection was not there any more.

Domoto: No. As far as when it comes to the time of relocation, I can tell later.

Methods of Shipping. Fumigation

Riess: Did your father write in English?

Domoto: No. The only things he used to write were--he got to know how to write the names of plants. Letters in Japanese--. He knew what he wanted, and then the bookkeeper used to do the writing in Japanese letters, the ordering. No telephones, almost all letter correspondence.

Riess: How long was the gap between an order and getting it filled?

Domoto: The fastest steamer in those days, I think we had to figure at least a month on the steamer. So the plants that came in, it would mean at least a month and a half from the time it was packed to the time it got to Oakland, San Francisco.

Riess: There must have been a whole business of caring for the plants on shipboard, then?

Domoto: No, there was no care. They were all in enclosed boxes.

Riess: But they didn't need to get moisture to them?

Domoto: No, they could still come in with the soil at that time, so the roots would be wrapped with spagnum moss, and then wrapped very tightly with rice straw, and rope, wound around, and made a tight ball, and then packed into crates. One crate, they would have maybe three sections where the ends of the balls would be up against the end of the box, and then each group was squeezed in very tightly.

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Riess: Was there was a process of fumigating at this end? This is before Quarantine 37?

Domoto: Oh, yes, way before. I think there was very little in the way of inspection. They were supposed to be clean plants when they came, but after they came to San Francisco, we had to fumigate them in the nursery.

Riess: What kind of equipment did you use to fumigate?

Domoto: Actually there was very little fumigation in that period, the early period. Just they'd open up the box and look at it. But sometimes--there was a quarantine on chestnut trees and some of the fruit trees. And some of the boxes would come in, and they

wouldn't even open them if it was not permitted, and we'd have to pour fuel oil over the top of the box and burn it. That was before 1910.

After 1910 or '12, the nursery went from there, from 55th Avenue, to 79th Avenue [7921 Krause Street]. We had built a new glass house--this would be between about 1910 and 1914, I guess. This was the time we made a room for fumigating. Then we would take the plants out of the box, pack them in this room, and then I remember we would fumigate them.

We used to have an old white porcelain chamber pot--they had that in there. They used to measure sulfuric acid in there, and then the cyanide weighed out, and they used to have a little trap door and we'd dump the cyanide pellets into it and then close the trap door, and then they had to be left in there overnight and then opened up. That was the only fumigation. There was very little spraying done; they used to all fumigate.

Riess: Was that a very hazardous practice?

Domoto: It was, and [there were] nowhere near the precautions you have to take these days. In fact, I used to drop the cyanide in. Later it got a little better, and the cyanide, instead of being in lumps and we had to weigh it out, it used to be made into little pellets--not pellets, but bricquets, like a bricquet. They must have weighed--I don't know the weight, but each of those was supposed to be one ounce or something. So you'd drop two or three depending on the size of the room, and the degree of strength that they'd use for fumigating.

Kid Glove Oranges

Riess: You said your father came from an agricultural family. What kind of agriculture?

Domoto: The family, I guess they were mostly rice, and mostly--I don't think they raised any, but they were in the section where the Mandarin oranges were being grown. I don't know how soon after the brothers came from Japan, but they had some oranges that came from Mandarin--they used to call it Kid Glove oranges.

Riess: Kid Glove? Because of the feeling of the texture?

Domoto: Yes. And they said they used to stand out on the street there in San Francisco and sell them. They used to peel the orange and

show it to the people, let them taste it and buy it. It went over really good.

So the next year, when the season came in, the two brothers decided to get a bigger shipment, and for some reason I understand that the shipment was delayed, or something went wrong with the packing, I don't know, but the things had rotted en route. They had to clean out the ship's hold where it was kept, but they had no money to pay for the cleaning, so the two brothers had to go in there and clean it out themselves.

Riess: Good luck, bad luck! What prefecture did they come from?

Domoto: I think it was Wakayama Ken.

Riess: Your father sounds gutsy.

Domoto: Most of the earlier generation that came in along that period, they were all very adventurous. The ones I knew, most of them came from--and several around the Bay Area here, they were into agriculture or farmed--they were all from the same area.

Riess: He was a person willing to take some risks, certainly.

Domoto: Yes. I think in that respect probably yes.

The New Ranch, Greenhouses

Domoto: About the last of the big import orders came from Japan for the 1915 Fair. That was the last of the big import orders that came in, either from Japan or from Europe.

Riess: By 1910 your family had moved to what you call the New Ranch, at 79th and Olive in Oakland. Where is that? What's there now?

Domoto: What's there now, it's a park. I don't know what it's called. It's between East 14th and Foothill Boulevard.

The New Ranch I think was purchased about the year I was born, around 1901 or 1902, at that time. It was owned by a family called Dowling.

Riess: Did your family purchase it outright?

Domoto: Oh, no, it was on contract.

Riess: The Dowling family held the mortgage?

Domoto: Yes. Eventually it was paid off. Then I guess after that, the banks held the mortgage.

Riess: It sounds like it was a huge undertaking. Twenty-five greenhouses, twenty-eight by two hundred feet in size. [California Flower Marketing book says fifty-two greenhouses on thirty-five acres.]

Domoto: My cousin wrote up an article. She saw some of the pictures in the catalogues. So as far as greenhouses, twenty-eight by two hundred, that was about the largest one. The other houses were much smaller, and instead of being--. Nowadays modern greenhouses all are equal span, but in those days the forcing greenhouses were three-quarter span. Big sunny side and a short side. And those would be what they call the range houses, one next to each other. It wasn't until much later that even-span houses were being built.

Riess: Tell me about the technology of that. Why did they decide the even span was better?

Domoto: Because of the sunlight.

Riess: But it sounds like getting three-quarters of the sun is getting more sun.

Domoto: The morning sun. I think that most houses used to run east and west. So the morning sun would hit on the short side, and the angle being sharper, it let more light into the house than the afternoon. The afternoon sun, the longer sunlight, would come in on the sloping side. And even the tables in the houses in those days were on elevated benches. The plants would be about an even distance away from the roof, but the slope of the benches, the benches would go the length of the house, but they'd have one tier, and the next tier. Then we used to have planks to walk on in between the benches, just mainly for the rose houses, the cut flower, rose growing.

Riess: Was that the style of the greenhouses in Japan?

Domoto: No. Those greenhouses probably came from back East or even maybe Europe. Because greenhouses as such in Japan are a much later thing.

Riess: What did they use for protection in Japan?

Domoto: I don't know. Horticulture in Japan, commercial production, is--I wouldn't say primitive, but probably from what I know, have heard

about, it was on a much smaller scale. I think the horticulture, greenhouse, and nursery practice in California followed more the European practice, adapting it to the California climate.

Ikebana, and Japanese Culture

Riess: When I think of flower arrangement in Japan, it's certainly on a smaller scale.

Domoto: You see, ikebana and bonsai as such really didn't come into prominence until way after the war.

Riess: In Japan?

Domoto: No, I mean here.

Riess: But I was trying to think about why in Japan there would not be a big floriculture business.

Domoto: Ikebana was more the practice of the elite group. It was like someone in the upper class in the US, they'd be taking music and dance lessons, stuff like that.

Riess: A leisure class activity.

Domoto: I would think it would be class-related. You had to be rich in order to be able to have those vases and things. The other flower arranging, probably if they had the alcove in the home, would be very simple. The art of flower arranging, it wasn't until much later that the practice started to get going, where you had different schools of ikebana.

Riess: That's interesting. I guess what I think of as typical Japanese activities, like writing haiku, and ikebana and playing samisen or something, are all more related to the upper classes?

Domoto: I think the koto in Japan could be compared with our piano. If they're taking koto lessons, why, that was the culture lesson. Whereas if they played the samisen or the banjo, that would be probably the instrument of the middle class. The well-trained geishas used to entertain with the samisen or the koto. A good geisha would probably be able to play the samisen really well. It was only the--I'm not sure whether the older generation of the women really played much samisen. I more or less--I may be wrong, because I never studied history there, but I have a feeling that

the samisen was connected more with the happy times and the drinking, entertainment side.

In the U.S., the average family, the son or daughter was taught piano lessons--or probably in the deep South, they might take banjo or violin. Violin, of course, someone in their family might, if they wanted to be a famous violinist or something. But otherwise, piano was the jazz music here, both for the common man and the elite.

Riess: Since we're speculating about culture, was the composing of haiku an upper-class thing?

Domoto: I don't know. I didn't care too much about any of this. It's probably like your old English poets, the bards, in comparing the history, that was probably about the same. As far as the older generation, some of them would have pretty good voices, and they'd sing. I didn't know what they were singing, but most of them probably might be connected with the ballads of the South, country music.

Employees at the New Ranch

Riess: I know that you didn't live in Japan, so I wonder, is your knowledge of the ways of Japan from reading? Have you enjoyed reading novels or literature of Japan?

Domoto: No. My idea of reading Japanese is torture.

Riess: I don't mean in the language, but translations of books?

Domoto: No. Most of it [knowledge] is from hearing people talk about it, and knowing what they did--from that angle. As far as studying history, that would be mostly from my Stanford days, and that would be much later. This [what we are talking about] would be what I heard from the employees of my father.

In those days, quite a number of the men that worked for my dad were younger men from Japan who were here so they wouldn't have to go into the compulsory military training.

Riess: What age is that?

Domoto: I guess it must have been in the late teens to the early twenties, I guess--maybe just out of high school, or just into college--so that they won't have to go and take compulsory training. Most of

them, they were earnest enough, but I never could see how they were very practical.

Riess: Do you mean that they were conscientious objectors?

Domoto: No. Conscientious objectors, that's a word that was coined in World War II. World War I, there were no conscientious objectors. They were just called draft evaders. "Conscientious" is more of the next generation, when they wanted to have a little better connotation of what it meant.

Riess: But for these young Japanese men who wanted to avoid military training, was it a matter of principle or was it that they just wanted not to have to do that at that time?

Domoto: The military training is very rigid, and tough. They wanted to get away from it.

Along after 1917, I guess the first of the persons from Japan supposed to be a guy from an agricultural school that was any good as far as nursery was from a school in northern Japan, in a section called Chiba. He was trained as a pot plant grower. We used to raise cyclamen in those days, and he was put in charge, and I think produced some of the best cyclamen plants at that time for the flower market.

Riess: Did those young men, workers, go back to Japan after a certain period of time?

Domoto: The first group, most of them went back in old age, I think.

The earlier ones that came from Japan and were with my father, they were more agricultural, and a good many of those people went into the flower business around the Bay Area here. Some, one or two of them, probably went to Los Angeles in the cut flower business, growing carnations or chrysanthemums, roses, but they were mostly around the Bay Area. [See discussion, chapter IX.]

Riess: I started to ask earlier what kind of training your father would have had in Japan, by the time he was sixteen.

Domoto: No training. When you're sixteen, you don't have much training.

III TOICHI DOMOTO

Learning Kan-ji

Riess: One thing I wanted to pursue: you said it would be "torture" to read a novel in Japanese. Do you read Japanese? Were you brought up to be bilingual by your parents?

Domoto: We were taught a little bit, but I never cared for any of that. By 1916, '17, when Quarantine 37 went in, I had this idea, if they want to buy plants, if they want to sell plants to me, they've got to read English. That was my attitude as a youngster. "If they can't read my English, I'll get them from somebody else that can."

Riess: That's a pretty tough stand.

Domoto: That was my thought. As far as trying to learn Japanese--not that I wanted to learn Japanese, but because my mother wanted us to be able to learn Japanese--the only thing I remember in those days was we had a teacher, a hieroglyphic teacher rather than a language teacher. He was an ex-principal of a Japanese school, and he was a good teacher. So I learned the Kan-ji, or the Chinese hieroglyphics, and I can get these Japanese books [on bonsai] now, and I'm thankful I learned that, because I can count the strokes and look in the dictionary to find the name of the plants. But as far as reading the text, I can't read it.

Riess: What is Kan-ji?

Domoto: Kan-ji means "Chinese word." "Kan" is I think Chinese, and "ji" is word. In Japanese, when you say Kan-ji, it would be [spells]. But translated, it means--the characters in Chinese are block-letters. That's the Chinese hieroglyphic, their alphabet. That went to Japan.

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Riess: Is learning Kan-ji part of the education of the Japanese student?

Domoto: Oh yes, it was, but it became less and less. The Japanese language in reading even the bonsai books now, it's entirely different.

Riess: This is Kan-ji? [looking at bonsai book]

Domoto: Yes, this is Kan-ji. Yes. You see, each of those is a stroke, and in a Japanese dictionary they're separated by number of strokes. In Kan-ji, the "sai" [in bonsai] means art. But the Kan-ji is made up of words. Even the carvings on your walls in South America, some of those hieroglyphics, like the hieroglyphic for tree, has the same meaning there in Chinese. It would be this [demonstrates]--that's your tree. Then for a man, it would be just the two strokes.

Then some of the more complicated letters are made up of a composition of the different strokes. For instance, anything that's wood or tree would have a symbol like that; that means wood. [demonstrates] "Ki."

Riess: A vertical shape plus the tree, the growing form.

Domoto: Yes. That would be the left side. Then the right side would be whatever strokes would describe the name, like tsuga or cryptomeria, or pines.

Early Schooling

Riess: You were willing to learn Japanese to that extent. That's what your mother made sure that you learned.

Domoto: Well, I learned that from the teacher.

Riess: Was that after school?

Domoto: All after school. The thing [is] that, the thought would run through--. If I was writing a composition in English, and then going to Japanese school after school, my English composition, if I got a good grade in that, no corrections, I was thinking in English. And then sometimes the teacher would say, "Grammatically correct, but rather stilted in form."

I remember those comments I used to get back, and I couldn't understand why I would do that. Here I was doing my best to do

it, but then when my interest in the Japanese language side got so I was thinking more that way, why, then it would relate to my English writing, compositions.

Riess: Somewhere in your head you would translate?

Domoto: Yes, without knowing what you were doing. You're thinking either what you're reading in Japanese or English. So as far as composition, I used to have to spend almost--I'd wait until the last minute to do my composition papers, I'd stay up half the night to get them done.

Riess: Were you the scholar in your family? The smartest child?

Domoto: I was the only son. My brother was much younger; he was ten years younger, so it's a different decade already. But I don't know, I was the only son; the rest were daughters.

Career Hopes, and Reality, Ted Sakai

Domoto: I didn't have a chance to go out, since we were in a rural area, didn't have much chance to go out and play, so I used to be around the nursery more, following my dad or fooling around there. But as far as being a nurseryman, I had no desire at the time to be a nurseryman. I wanted to be something connected with--a mechanic.

Riess: Had some teacher told you that you had a good feeling for mechanics?

Domoto: No, it was just that around the nursery we had a lot of things and I used to like to fool around with mechanics.

Riess: There are lots of things to fix, aren't there?

Domoto: Yes. In the nursery you had to be a plumber, and then anything else that would be along that line--steamfitter, carpenter. So you follow along, you learn.

It's funny, my neighbor, Ted Sakai, from the Sakai family in Richmond, he was in college in engineering. And yet he was the oldest son, and he went to work in the family business growing roses. He probably has the largest rose range in the Bay Area here now.

Riess: He's adjacent to you?

- Domoto: Just the other side, going towards Tennyson Road. There's the high school, right next to the high school, the big range of greenhouses there, and that's all they raise is roses.
- Riess: Did he have the same experience as you, that he wanted to get into mechanics?
- Domoto: Yes, and then his thinking--I had talked to him, I think we ran up against the same thing: there's little chance for a college graduate in engineering to get a good job because of discrimination, even now.

So even though we had that knowledge, in the love for tinkering with the cars and things of that type, why, the only thing where we had any chance to do and make a living was in the nursery. And being the oldest in the family, more and more the job of the nursery was shifted onto us; the second generation, the younger ones took it on.

Mechanical Solutions. Rose Growing

- Riess: When we looked at your college photo albums, I admired how wonderfully they were put together, the placement on the page, and your lettering, and a sort of collage. Are you sure you didn't want to go into some design profession, or architecture?
- Domoto: No. My interest was always around mechanical things. I thought I would be some kind of engineer, but the way the society was, there wasn't much future.

Just the other day I was talking with Ted Sakai. He said as far as interest in mechanics--and I guess in my case too--any time anything came along that we thought we could mechanize to make it easier for us to work with, we could see the difference, we would put it in. We were willing to try it.

Having that inclination--like in the greenhouse you use boilers for heating, steam boilers, and I noticed whenever any new, mechanical idea for safety came along, he was one of the first ones to put it in the greenhouse. Where some of the older fellows operating, they would hesitate putting anything new in because they couldn't see it.

- Riess: What is an example of something in your nursery?

Domoto: In my case-- . We used to have to change the soil in the rose houses every two years, put fresh soil in to plant the roses. And in order to take the soil out, we always used to use wheelbarrows. But after seeing the cart deal the fruit dryers used-- .

The carnation growers had fixed a method where they would have a two-sided box for the plants they were growing outside during the early part of the season. Then when it was time to bring them into the greenhouse, that section would come in. And they had those, like the fruit-drying carts, the four wheel, the rail-like track, they put them on that and rolled it in.

We had carpenters in those days and they built sectioned track, like toy electric train tracks, you know, same idea, so we could roll them [boxes] in, put that on top of the bench, and throw the soil into the box and haul it outside and dump it into the dump wagon and haul it out to the field.

Riess: Were you preparing new soil to replace it?

Domoto: Yes, in those days we'd have a field area, and the area that the soil would be brought in, they would plant cover crops in there ahead, and get ready. And even get some cow manure and plow it and work it in, and bring that soil in. Then where we took the soil--we would just rotate the soil from the greenhouse out there in the field, and the fresh soil would go into the benches.

Riess: And how many years between rotations?

Domoto: In those days about two, or three. Now they hardly ever change the soil. They steam the soil. Rose growing is entirely different now. Before, if the rose varieties went for more than a couple of years the production got poor. Now they prune them back, and in the greenhouses now you can see where they get real tall, and they still get good [production].

Riess: The Sakais were growing roses when the Domotos were growing roses?

Domoto: Yes, there was quite a group over in the Richmond area, several families over there, Sakais, Nabetas, Adachis.

Riess: This Sakai who is your neighbor, did he have his greenhouses here?

Domoto: No, he built here in--it must have been after the war. They were expanding over here. They still have a place in Richmond where his two brothers operate the old place. And Ted came out here, and started to develop this place over here. They are, I would say, the best rose-growers around here. They timed it right.

Riess: How long was that a part of your operation?

Domoto: After I came back from college, in 1926, 1927, I had very little to do with the cut flowers then. I was mostly into nursery pot plants.

Riess: Then when you were talking about mechanizing the soil replacement, are you referring back to before college?

Domoto: That was before, during around 1915, 1916, 1917. Early.

Fertilizer Mix

Riess: Are there other mechanical innovations you brought in when you established this place?

Domoto: I don't think anything really different too much. Probably the first thing that evolved in the nursery part there as far as growing was the fertilizing method. That has changed. In Dad's place, the old place, you used to have a tank house, a water tank on top, and then you would have a concrete basin underneath, and you would throw fertilizer into there, and then pump the liquid out of that for liquid feeding. Just a hit and miss idea.

Later, much later, the growers got a lot more scientific, more by analysis, rather than hit or miss. Shimmy [Yoshimi] Shibata was one of the first to bring in an outside expert. He had studied at Ohio State and he got an expert from Ohio State to come out and supervise the fertilizing. That must have been along in the early thirties. And I think also McLellan earlier had hired [this man] to consult.

Instead of just pumping liquid out, hit or miss, it got so that the newer ones, they get the simple elements in maybe four or five different tanks, and they use a proportioner to feed whatever's going in. And that's because instead of growing a varied crop, they were just growing one crop--roses, or carnations. And then they'd also find out that at a certain time they were supposed to feed.

Riess: Did they learn method from the smart young sons coming back from college?

Domoto: Some of it was because some of them studied floriculture, like I did. But the other part is the change in the industry itself.

They used to have the fertilizer salesmen coming in, trying to sell the fertilizer.

But I guess the innovation of more the mechanical, scientific side, really didn't come in, really scientific, until much later when the younger students graduated from college in floriculture, or agriculture. And then they started to put those things in. Not the first generation, but the beginning of the older second generation that took over the growing. Like Shimmy.

That's the cut flower side. The nursery side probably almost correlates, but a little differently. The cut flower side, the pot plant side, they were more intensive growers, whereas the nursery side, very few second generation went into the retail nursery. They had little nurseries, but not so much in production. They were more buy and sell. In southern California they got fairly large, growing one item. But in the Bay Area we never had any really large nursery growers. Mostly around the Bay Area they went more into the greenhouse, either the cut flower or pot plant side. So actually there was a divergence of commodity they were raising.

Environmental Cleanup

Riess: Driving to this interview I heard a discussion on the radio of methyl bromide, eliminating its use because of the damage to the ozone.

Domoto: Oh, everything! Even fertilizers. Mt. Eden Nursery--that's the Shibatas, I was talking with Jerry Shibata--they had a place down past Decoto, on the highway going into San Jose, on the left-hand side. They went into production growing chrysanthemum cuttings, just selling their cuttings to the growers. They called it Cal-Florida. Then when most of the growers moved on to the Watsonville-Salinas area they decided to move their propagation down there because there was no sense in growing the cuttings and taking them down there. So they had the place for sale.

Since the area has been zoned residential, or high density, where they had a fuel tank buried in the ground, and it was leaking, they had to take out 28 feet of soil. And the growing area, where they had the plants outside, because they had been using different fertilizers, and methyl bromide and some of the other things, in order to sell that property for residential they had to remove the top two feet of soil, or else they could reverse

it with three feet of soil below that, put that down--but if you did that you had to wait two years before you could use it.

Riess: You think this is overly conscientious?

Domoto: I think so. Like in his place, and ours around here, in order to save heat all the steam pipes, the heating pipes, we used to cover with asbestos. Well, portions of that were probably thrown out, but any part of that could drop down, and asbestos now is a no-no. Even in the buildings, we used to have asbestos board for insulation in the older houses, and probably even here, I don't know. But that's a no-no.

Riess: I interviewed Ruth Bancroft about her cactus and succulent garden in Walnut Creek. The land used to be covered with walnut trees, and when they removed the trees to start the garden in 1971 they fumigated with methyl bromide. I was interested in whether you went through any similar process when you removed the apricot trees here.

Domoto: No.

Riess: Why would she? And why wouldn't you?

Domoto: Different era.

Riess: Not having done it, did that mean you were constantly battling certain funguses?

Domoto: The only battle--. The only thing we were probably worried about around here was being able to pull the old stumps out, the apricots, because some of the roots might have oak root fungus, something like that.

Riess: You didn't feel you had to sterilize the soil?

Domoto: Oh, no. That was a matter of merely planting a cover crop and buy cow manure and spread it over the field and plow it in. Sterilizing the soil, that didn't come in until much later.

And in the cut flower side, instead of moving all that soil outside and changing it, they started to steam-sterilize the soil, and put in additives, either some fresh soil or fertilizer, and work that in. They found out they could produce the same crop and eliminate all that labor of changing the soil.

Riess: And on that Bancroft land they prepared the soil by mixing compost and soil and sand, and they laid out the beds, and in two weeks

they were awash in weeds, and were spraying for weeds, and handpicking weeds. What did you use to fight weeds?

Domoto: Oh, 2 4-D. And now, of course, we have Roundup. Not 2 4-D.

But composting the soil, and mixing that compost pile, it is gradually changing. History is changing, from field preparation--the old days when they used to buy fresh soil, and put a layer of soil and a layer of manure and a layer of soil and then having to turn it over by hand. Then more modern, they got so they used a rototiller to mix it in. It's been a gradual evolution all the way along the line without even noticing. The younger ones going in, they won't even know what they did before.

Riess: The ones who didn't grow up on the farm, or in the nursery.

Domoto: Even if they grew up in the nursery they might know what was happening there, but they wouldn't know what their fathers had done before. Unless they were old enough to kind of remember what happened.

Third Generation

Riess: We were talking about generational changes.

Domoto: The third generation now, very few are going into the nursery business. Like Sakai's family, I think there are several children--male and female--and only one member of the family is still with the nursery side of the business. And he's in the selling side rather than the growing side; he's one of the younger ones.

The rest are--one of the sons is a fiscal administrator for Stanford. Recently he resigned and went to take a job in Hawaii. One of the daughters is a physical therapist, and the other is a medical doctor. They're all in the professions. The other one is an attorney. Very few are going into the nursery business as such.

Riess: Do daughters ever take over the businesses? Can you think of any? And I mean from the growing end.

Domoto: No. Of course, a lot of them used to have to work around the greenhouses, if the family operated the thing in a small way, like any small business. But as far as them going into it, I don't know of any.

Riess: It wouldn't be encouraged?

Domoto: I don't think so. They were probably more into teaching or into independent things, social work, things like that. Not because they got any encouragement from the family or not, it was just they were more independent. And less parental influence, getting away from parental influence.

Riess: One of the reasons probably that it was hard when you graduated, or when Sakai graduated, to get a job is because you graduated into the Depression. Wasn't that part of it, rather than discrimination? Or do you think it was really discrimination?

Domoto: Even before the Depression, I remember several of the graduates from Cal and Stanford at that time had masters, and some of them even had Ph.D.s. At that time, back in '21 at Stanford, they had a number of graduate students from Japan. They were taking electrical engineering and mechanical engineering, and then they went back, because they came from Japan.

But the younger ones that graduated in the same class in June had a hard time getting a job here, and eventually, I think, one or two of my classmates here went back to Japan and got a job there. But there again, if they were American-born they were discriminated against. So their chance of getting a job was very slim.

At that time I think Westinghouse had a branch in Japan, and they were sending some of the students to study at Stanford. When they went back eventually they ended up being one of the administrators, so anybody that graduated from Stanford in engineering would have a fair chance of getting a job there in Japan.

As far as the university clubs, at Stanford you had a much stronger club in Japan than California did. So the graduate students from Cal, because we used to be on very friendly terms too, they used to ask me to attend the Stanford alumni club there, and they, of course, have their own club. In those days, they used to have a club together.

Riess: That's interesting, that there was that sort of route back through Westinghouse.

Domoto: Right now they talk about international trade, you can see how way back even then, how the business world is different entirely from the social world.

[tape interruption]

Story of the Interpreter

[discussing another interviewer-visitor to Mr. Domoto]

Domoto: [Assistant Professor] Chang at Stanford University, he and Iwata came over just a little while before you started these interviews and wanted to interview about Professor Ikihashi. I talked with them for two hours. They asked questions, talking.

Riess: Ikihashi was at Stanford?

Domoto: Yes, he was professor there in Japanese. He was one that had gone to the [Paris] peace conference [League of Nations] in those days, interpreters for the Japanese government.

One of my roommates at Stanford, George Mizota, he was Japanese-born and came to California at a very early age, and he was brought up by a Caucasian family down in Brawley. He really worked his way through Stanford, and later he went back to Japan. He graduated in commercial or international law.

At the time after [World] War II when they signed the surrender by Japan, he was there attending it, because he was Admiral Nomura's interpreter when he used to make a trip to the conferences. During War II, George told me later, all they had to do was sit around and talk and try to learn how to play golf, because they didn't trust Nomura. He had been trained in the American Naval Academy. He was not pro-Japanese, but he was of the opinion that Japan lacked the natural resources, and that in a long war Japan could never win.

Whereas the other group, they figured they could win, so they didn't want him with that feeling, being in the consulting group. So during the war, they didn't even get into--except for the time of the signing of the surrender, he [George] was brought in [with Nomura] because I think the thought was that he'd know more about the way the Americans were feeling, that it would be a little easier for him. At least that's the way George told me. I think he [George] was--being an attorney, he probably knew--the reason he got along with the admiral was because he wouldn't give his own interpretation. He would interpret just the thoughts that the admiral had.

Generation Gap

Domoto: That's the trouble with so many interpreters, they like to put their impressions in there. Actually, we're not getting true interpretation from a lot of these interpreters per se. When you listen to the TV or radio, when the interpreters come on, why, you know it's different from what the thought must be behind it. And that is irregardless of what language they have.

I think a lot of them, unless they're--well, I feel now, unless they are the same generation, you're not going to get the same interpretation. Because each generation, and now probably the generation gap is probably getting less and less--the older generation there is probably fifteen, twenty years before there's much difference in the generation gap. But now it's much closer.

Like the hippie generation, now I see the sociologists have divided it into the early, middle, and late hippies. Because they all have different ideas. My wife used to tell my son about the hard times we had during the first Depression, how little we had to live with, or work with. His answer, and I still remember it, was, "Mom, aren't you glad you're living with us now?"

You can tell them all you want about the first Depression, the second Depression, they don't know because they haven't been taught that way. Their lifestyle is different. So probably a man earning a dollar, two dollars a day, had to support a family on two dollars a day--it's just a figure, it doesn't mean anything.

Riess: But you have had the experience, I think you told me, of suddenly another generation becoming interested in the past. Perhaps your son is not so interested, but your grandchildren are. Isn't that what you were saying to me, that there's more interest in the past?

Domoto: As far as history, yes, but as far as going into the nursery business, no.

Riess: Yes, history.

Domoto: Right now, I find not only in the Japanese but other nationalities, I find that they're interested in the family tree. Not even doing anything about it, but they like to know what happened, where they came from. A lot of the European immigrants, they don't know where they came from either, especially if they came in without a--illegally--like some of them did.

Riess: Changed their names.

Domoto: Changed their names, and they don't know what area they came from, especially if their parents were born and they passed away here, they don't know.

Riess: Very often there's an unhappy story.

Domoto: Most of them, or else they're very adventurous and came. Either way.

Riess: Have you had a chance to talk with any of the Southeast Asian immigrants, who are now taking over some of the agricultural work, the Cambodians or Vietnamese?

Domoto: No.

Riess: I wondered if you had any impressions of what this new wave of Asian immigrants meant.

Domoto: All I know is what I hear. Most of the new immigrants as such are coming in are going into like the restaurant business. The Koreans have taken over the Chinese restaurants that were owned by Cantonese, the Koreans are taking them over. And then also, some of the fruit sellers, fruit and vegetables. I think for a while there were some Koreans that were going into doing gardening work; a few of them are going into the business on their own.

Recently, there has been--I noticed in Bonsai [magazine]--I guess they're either from Korea or from Hong Kong, they're importing plants and things, going that line. Most of the others, if they do come from Japan, they're more interested in the business side, industry.

Early Childhood Memories of the Nursery

Riess: I'd like to go back to your first memories of life around the nursery.

Domoto: My first impression I have of the nursery, I never was very much interested in plants per se. The thing that I know is my father and mother told me when I first started to walk around, when we were getting plants from Japan, importing at that early period, it was plants that I remember as camellias, daphne, aspidistras, the different fruit trees--. And fern balls. The davillia fern that would be wound around with a moss ball, and they'd soak it, and the dormant roots would come out in fronds.

Riess: What kind of fern?

Domoto: Davillia [squirrels foot fern]. That was the common one, in the ball shape. They'd soak them in the tub overnight to get the moss really wet, and then hang them in the warm greenhouse, and eventually the fronds would come out, and then they'd sell them. We used to ship them out.

Riess: And that's one of the things you remember seeing when you were very young?

Domoto: In the early days that they were importing. And then later, the camellias--not too many varieties at that time. I don't remember the flowers in those days, but the first camellia I remember, I came back from the glass house and I had pulled a lot of the buds off, and brought them--I called them momo, it means peach. I didn't know it. I guess if it wasn't for the fact I was a kid and I was really cute, why, I would have probably gotten spanked. [laughter] Because they were importing these plants with the buds, to sell them so they'd flower in the spring, and the variety--it was 'Pink Perfection,' which is even now still sold--is one that drops the buds very easily.

'Pink Perfection' is the name that my father gave to it--they call it 'Usu-Otume' in Japan. So he gave it the name 'Pink Perfection.' There are about three or four varieties of the early camellias. There is 'Pink Perfection,' and 'Red Otume,' which is supposed to be the Perfection type. Then there was the 'Purity,' or 'Shiragiku.' 'Shiragiku' means white chrysanthemum, and that was named 'Purity.' And 'Daikagura [Azalea macrantha, or Rhododendron indicum].' 'Daikagura' is still called 'Daikagura.'

Riess: So there you were, with this handful of buds--momo.

Domoto: Yes. I guess it must have been a small handful, because small hands don't hold very much.

Riess: Do you know the story of Momotaro? Would the story of the Peach Boy have had a kind of magic quality for you?

Domoto: I don't--the name probably might have. I know some of the Japanese fables like Momotaro because Mother used to relate them to us.

Riess: So until you were ready to go to school, you spent a lot of your time--

Domoto: Just playing around the nursery. I had no interest in plants at that time. I knew what was grown, but as far as interest--.

Grammar School

Domoto: I didn't start grammar school until I was eight years old.

Riess: Was that because of the language, or because you were so far out in the country?

Domoto: Too far away to go to school.

Riess: What happened when you were eight? Was this a new school?

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Domoto: It was called Melrose Heights. It was on 50th and Melrose Avenue. I went there and of course--all I knew was when I wanted to go to the bathroom, I had to "go to the toilet."

Riess: Was it kind of a torture in the beginning?

Domoto: Oh, yes, because I didn't understand a word. I had to learn the alphabet, and you didn't learn it "A, B, C," it was like the sounds--[phonetically] "ah, bee, cee, dee, eh, eff, gee [hard g], aitch, i"--phonetic sounds. So when I'd get home, my dad was trying to help me with my English, and so A, B, C--and I didn't know what he was talking about.

Riess: It sounds hard. Were you in a class with other Japanese boys?

Domoto: I was the only one. There were very few Japanese at that time. My cousin, she took me to the school the first day of school, but as far as any other time around the school, I never saw her. So I was pretty much on my own.

Riess: And were you left out of the play of the other children?

Domoto: I don't remember that part so much, because there wasn't too much play. Probably the only recess, you'd go because you wanted to go to the bathroom. Recess play as such, I don't remember until about the third grade at Lockwood Grammar School. Then they used to have--you'd go out and play tag or something like that.

Riess: And then was it possible for you to join in at that point?

Domoto: Not too much, although in most of my association with school I'd get along with a few students, not try to get along with the whole bunch. I was not particularly a loner, but I was not physically endowed, shall we say, to go into athletics or anything like that. So I was more of a bystander.

Embarrassing Moments

Domoto: One of my embarrassing moments in the grammar school was, we were turning our papers, and the corner of the paper happened to get in my eye and tears started to run. The teacher saw me, and I couldn't tell her what happened. She thought I must have a stomachache, so she called my cousin and told her to bring me home, find out if something was wrong. [laughter]

Riess: Because you still hadn't enough English to explain that you had cut yourself with the paper?

Domoto: No. I couldn't tell her.

Riess: Oh, dear. Was the teacher nice to you?

Domoto: Yes, most--my first and second grade teachers, most of my teachers I got along with very well. That was in the first and second grade. Then we moved to the New Ranch in the Lockwood School District.

##

Riess: When we were looking at your albums I was struck by the great mixture of ethnic types in the students at Lockwood Grammar School.

Domoto: The first grammar school, Melrose Heights, in Oakland, that took in the students from the Foothill area of Oakland, between 50th and 55th Avenue, about Foothill Boulevard. That was more of what you might call a straight white group. There were very few other nationalities there, and I was probably the only Japanese. A few others, probably of German descent.

When it came to Lockwood--we moved to Lockwood in 1910--that was much more a mixed group. Portuguese, some Italian, German--very few Negroes at that time. I think there was one boy in our class, and he wasn't all black, and we never thought of him as black. And there was a Swedish family. So, quite a mixture.

Riess: The students looked polished and prosperous in the picture.

Domoto: Well, that was just for the picture. They tried to have uniform dresses, and suits, for the picture. The parents tried to provide that.

Riess: Do you know any of those classmates now? Did they prosper?

Domoto: I don't know. Even my high school group I don't remember. If they did, I don't know.

In the Lockwood School, the teachers were of German descent. The first principal who was there I think was German. His name was Greenman. Big heavyset man. The punishment in those days, if you got sent to his office, you'd get a beating with a strap. I never got a beating from him.

I could never carry a tune, and so when they'd have a music lesson, I guess it was in fourth or fifth grade, grammar school, and we were supposed to have a singing lesson, each one would get up and try to sing "do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do." They said to me, "No, you're off key." I said, "I'm doing my best." I guess she thought that I and a few others were deliberately not doing what we were being told. So we'd be sent out of school by the grass, we'd go out in the playground.

At that time there used to be a big old cypress tree that we could climb, and we could get up on top of that, and when we got there, we would yell our head off singing, you know. I don't think you could hear that much, but we were out there singing. I think there were about five of us who always would get sent out, one after the other.

Riess: Then would you tell your parents after school when this had happened?

Domoto: Oh, no. I'd get a lecture. But actually, at that time I wasn't able to carry a tune. I was doing my best, but I thought well, if they don't want me in there I'll go outside.

The second principal we had, we used to line up there--this is the third or fourth grade--we would line up during recess to go into the classroom, and when we were in line we were not supposed to talk. We had a substitute teacher, and I think the student in front of me or back of me was talking. I and another student right next to me, we were picked out as the ones talking in line, and we were sent to the principal.

We had to hold our hands out like this [demonstrates]. He said, "Hold out your hands," and he'd get a leather strap and whip our hands. I never knew [that] if I yelled or cried he would stop. As long as I didn't, he didn't stop, he kept hitting me. This was before lunch. I couldn't hold my sandwich at lunchtime. I was hit so hard, my hands were swollen. I didn't talk. I figured something I did was wrong.

Riess: You thought to be strong would be good.

- Domoto: A boy was not supposed to cry. A woman would cry, but no matter if I was hurt, I was not supposed to cry. That was being a silly kid, that's the way we were taught.
- Riess: That's the same in Japan as it is anywhere else, that stoicism for boys.
- Domoto: Yes. And even in European countries. If you're a cry-baby, why, you're a sissy.
- Riess: Would your father have been angry if he had heard about all this?
- Domoto: No. Family discipline was left up to my mother. I guess we followed the same way. If it was a matter of discipline that she couldn't handle, or something that she thought that my father could do better, she'd say, "Go see Papa." We knew we'd better shut up.
- Riess: Did your parents spank you?
- Domoto: I don't remember. In fact, in the big family if my sisters got into a fight Mother would get them together and she'd whack them on the bottom, and then afterwards she'd make them sit down and find out what the trouble was about. We used to say, "I'd rather get a whack on the back than listen to her talk." [laughter]
- A lot of things you have to learn the hard way. When we were kids, there was this creek running through the place, and a weed that was called wormwood would grow there. We used to roll that up like cigarettes, smoke it. And then I would see my dad smoking a cigar. "Hey, that looks so good." One day, he was out, I knew he was in the nursery. I picked one up, sitting in the living room there--. It didn't taste so good. I don't see how he enjoyed it. In my mind, I still remember it. I didn't hear him come in. So he said, "Oh, don't stop, enjoy it." I don't know if I ever finished it. I think I got sicker than a dog. [laughter]
- Riess: Very smart!
- Domoto: He used to smoke quite a bit in those days.
- Riess: Just cigars?
- Domoto: No. Well, cigars, only occasionally. You rolled your own, the one called Pedro, used to be you'd get little cans of tobacco. So he used to roll them up and smoke quite a bit. But that was the only time--I never had any more inclination to smoke.

Lockwood School Graduation Program

PROGRAM

OVERTURE—"Rigoletto" . . . Verdi
Lockwood Band

PROCESSIONAL

INVOCATION . . . Rev. Griffith Griffiths

RESPONSE . . . Graduating Class

SALUTATORY . . . Gladys Lefler

BASS MELODY—"The Mighty Deep" . Jude
Bassoon, John Deasy
Helicon, Ferris Wallace

PROPHECY . . . Adam Kirth

CLASS CHORUS—

(a) "Pirate Chorus" . . . Sullivan

(b) "White Butterflies" . . . Lang

(c) "Gipsy Camp" . . . Motherwell

ADDRESS . . . Mr. Robert Robertson

DOUBLE QUARTETTE . Pastoral-French

VALEDICTORY . . . Alice Guild

RESPONSE . . . Emma Mattos

BARITONE SOLO—"Miserere" from "Il-
Trovatore" . . . Verdi
James Thompson

PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS—

Principal C. H. Greenman

RECESSIONAL

GRADUATES

FRED DALE ARCHER

GEORGETTE MARY BAS

HAZEL HANNAH BURROWS

NORMA GRACE BOSCACCI

MARY CATHERINE CEDZO

ARABELLA HARRIETT CARTER

EUGENIE CLAIRE COMBATALADE

STANLEY ALEXANDER COOKSON

JOHN HENRY DEASY

TOICHI DOMOTO

ALICE GUILD

AURORA MARGARET GUSTA

ASTA IDA HARRISON

FRED CLARE HUTCHINS

ADAM JOSEPH KIRTH

GLADYS VIOLET LEFLER

ROSE MULLER

PHILOMENA DOROTHY MATTHEWS

CHARLES LE BRETON PLAMBECK

ANDREW REUBEN RASMUSSEN

ALVINA SCHMIDT

MAX JOSEPH SCHMIDT

LAURA BEATRICE SEARS

ARTHUR SIMPSON

JAMES THOMPSON

CHARLES WESLEY THOMPSON

RALPH FRANCIS VICTOR

FERRIS WAYNE WALLACE

CHARLES OWEN WALKER



Toichi Domoto, upper right, with his graduating class, Lockwood Intermediate School, 1917.

Nicotine Use in the Nursery

Domoto: The other thing that relates to nicotine is we used to have a big greenhouse full of palm, and about once or twice a year we'd have to go into and spray that with whale oil soap and nicotine. When I was in my teens then, I didn't do the spraying, but the man who was spraying would be right next to the palm trees and spray under this and that, and move on, turn the plants over and move on down the line. I used to pull the hose for him.

Along about noon, I didn't feel so good. But the man that was spraying, he took the job because he was a regular cigarette smoker. He said, "No problem." Then I guess around noon he went outside and never came back, so I went to look for him. He was sprawled out on the ground from inhaling too much of the nicotine.

Riess: [laughter] Out cold?

Domoto: Yes. I knew I didn't feel good, but it never knocked me out.

Riess: When did they stop using that combination?

Domoto: As far as going to the greenhouse and spraying, that wasn't until a much, much later date. And also Blackleaf 40 came in, which is the nicotine extract.

Before that, the wagon that used to go to San Francisco with the flowers, about once a month, or once maybe every six months or so, the cigar factory in San Francisco would have the stems that they pulled off when they made these cigars. So then they'd come back with a wagon full of stems, and we used to have them in a big shed. Then we would put that in the greenhouse, pile it, soak it a little bit, and then light it and let it smoulder. That was the fumigation for aphids control in the greenhouse.

Riess: That sounds kind of good, actually, if you stayed away from it.

Domoto: After I knew more about it--I think sometimes the [control] was more not from the nicotine, but from the smoke. We would light it and then go out and leave it until the next morning, and open it up.

It wasn't until much later that Blackleaf 40 came in. Even then, they used to make a sulfur paste and put it on the steam pipes, and when the steam was turned on, the sulfur would burn, and that was for mildew. Then at the same time I'd put two drops of Blackleaf 40 in the pipes, and that would evaporate.

Riess: These remedies for mildew and blight and fungus and all that, how were they known?

Domoto: The agricultural experiment stations.

Riess: Oh, you were getting advice from local agricultural experts?

Domoto: Yes. Inspectors would come out and they'd tell us what to use.

Even cyanide fumigation in the nursery, that stopped when the commercial fumigators started. Then we used to have to send to a place in San Francisco where they used to do the commercial fumigation.

Riess: So these are not old home remedies? These were what everyone was using at the time?

Domoto: Yes, at the time. The Blackleaf 40 was probably the first of the insecticides. Then for a while, pyrethrum powder came into prominence. Then there was a time when controlling ants, we had to mix honey and I forget what other ingredients for ant control.

Discrimination in Plant Inspection

Riess: I want to talk about the kind of help you got over the years from the agricultural services in California. That sounds like an interesting subject.

Domoto: In the early days, dealing with importing, it was mostly just a routine examination. But some of it I think was discriminatory. I can't prove it for sure.

Riess: You were talking about the chestnuts. Now, would that have been an example?

Domoto: I think so.

Riess: But there was a period in this country of chestnut blight, wasn't there?

Domoto: Yes. Oh, that probably could have happened because of that blight. They didn't want any more coming in.

Riess: Did it make a difference whether it was coming in from Japan or Holland, or was it the fact that it was coming in to a Japanese merchant?

Domoto: No. The type of plant that was coming from Europe, Holland were mostly tulip bulbs. That was the main crop from Holland. Belgium used to export azaleas, araucarias, boxwoods, and bay trees. Those were the main things that used to come in from Belgium.

Riess: But would the inspectors attack that kind of an import if you were receiving it?

Domoto: No, most of the other things would be--if they were looking for scale and other things, I think they--all of them were treated pretty even. But locally, just about in that era of change, we used to grow--my father grew cut flowers, like mainly roses. By that time the chrysanthemum growers and the carnation growers, the earlier generation all went on their own. That's when the cheesecloth houses started over towards San Mateo County. Shade houses, that's when that got started. Before that my dad was growing roses in all of his greenhouses.

Going back to how they [discriminated]--cyclamen and primrose, those were the main things for pot plants. At that time, mealy bugs were the main pests they were looking out for. I know a couple of times, having made some shipment down to, I think, a florist in Fresno or something, they came back, the crate wasn't even opened up. They said, "Infested with mealy bugs." We couldn't find any on it, but they said it was. I know Dad said, "I can't see how they can inspect it without taking the burlap covering off."

That was I think probably discriminatory, because the agricultural inspector knew someone down there--. Their family, I think the grandsons, used to be in the florist business. The agricultural commissioner had a flower shop in Oakland. The buyers from San Francisco would come over early and order a block of poinsettias, so they would get the first choice out of the block we had, because they used to buy the biggest quantity. But then this one from Oakland would come in, and he would want so many number ones, number twos. He said, "I want it out of this block." "Well, that's sold." "But I want those."

And if he didn't get them--. I know that was true, because the deputy that came out was either a son-in-law or a brother-in-law, and he didn't know a damn thing about inspecting anything. He had the whole greenhouse condemned until we got in touch with a federal inspector to come over. He [the local inspector] saw the spores on the back of the Boston ferns, and he thought he had to condemn the whole house!

Riess: Oh, that's stupid!

Domoto: Well, that's a your political job. See, now, they have to pass an examination to be an agricultural inspector, but those days, especially at the county level, why, it was all a political job.

I know we did have mealy bug at certain times, but most of the foreign plants, even though people had it, most of the inspectors would let it go because as soon as the flowers are gone, the plants are gone. But in this particular case it was just a box of plants in there, crated with burlap, and if the burlap had been ripped open or tacked off to inspect it, they could see-- . And the plants, we were very careful to make sure that they didn't have any on there. I don't have any theories, but I remember those things that I knew were happening.

Riess: I wondered if you could remember any times when it was made clear to you that if you gave them a favor, that they would overlook something?

Domoto: No. Nothing that way. The only pressure was--

Riess: Just to sell them the best plants.

Domoto: Yes. I don't think in any case there was any definite attempt to do what in our present day we would call bribe. It was just the pressure brought to us indirectly that way.

I think cut flower-wise, during the war [World War II], there were some cases in the beginning of the war of open expression of anti--[Japanese feelings].

Riess: You referred to the time of the quarantine. In an article that I read about Domoto Bros., Inc., it referred to importing quantities of English laurel and other laurels and boxwoods, all trained to shape, and that was the last real major shipment, for the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

Domoto: Yes. That was when the last ones came in.

Kurume Azaleas

Domoto: The Kurume azaleas and aspidistras--almost any of the ornamental plants that could come from Japan, the war was on, and the quarantine was already going into effect--wasn't effective yet, but there was no way of getting the plants from Japan to here because of the war. At that time Mr. [Charles W.] Ward, who was president of Cottage Garden Nursery back in Long Island, he told

my dad, "When you are in Japan, you buy all the plants you can get. I'll take care of the permits." Getting the permits to bring them in.

That meant getting the permit to ship on board, not so much the plants, but cargo [permits]. He would get the permits, and Dad would buy all the plants that he could to bring over here. They were talking about Quarantine 37 going in. He would get them in before the quarantine went in.

What they did was, they would divide the shipment in half, the costs would be divided in half. The plants would be divided half to Cottage Gardens, and half to us. The Cottage Gardens half, most of it was shipped to Eureka, California, where Cottage Garden had started a nursery there. Then they in turn shipped part of theirs back to the Queens, Long Island Nursery, and they divided some of the azalea plants there, between Henry [A.] Dreer in Philadelphia, and Bobink & Atkins.

Riess: Had your father been doing business with Ward for a long time?

Domoto: Oh, yes, and I remember Ward. He used to come out and buy plants. It came out in a scandal sheet, and I remember reading--. Actually, he was rather a playboy, and they sent him out to California because they didn't want him around the nursery there [Long Island]. His idea was they would start this bulb farm up in southern Washington and a nursery in Eureka. Private property. There they would grow azalea plants. They would train boxwood--azaleas, boxwood, and a few bay trees, and araucaria. Those four items that would grow in Eureka. And rhododendron. Eventually, they got rid of the boxwood and just grew azaleas and rhododendron.

Mr. Ward used to come out to the nursery in a chauffeur-driven car, and I could never--being a youngster and not too well acquainted with worldly ways--could never understand why he had two or three good-looking women with him in the car all the time. [laughter] He was a womanizer, I guess.

Riess: Did your father enlighten you?

Domoto: No, he didn't say anything. He'd come and talk to my dad about what he wanted and what he got, so we'd divide the plants. I guess two or three times he would come out with a woman.

The only other womanizer-type I remember, I think he was from the Talbot family. What is now Knowland Park, that area, I think it used to belong to the Talbot family. They used to come to the nursery to buy plants, and his bride--I remember her as being tall

and good-looking, but in the daytime she seemed to have an awful lot of paint, and I couldn't figure out why she was painted up. Then later, when I got older, I found out that she was a chorus girl!

IV BONSAI, AND ROSES AND BEETLES

[Interview 2: July 29, 1992] ##

Domoto: [looking at bonsais on the table where the interview is taking place] If you are at table-height [when you are looking at a bonsai], you're probably at about a third or fourth of the way up. In my pruning I feel--the big trees, you never look down on a big tree unless you're in an airplane, you're always looking up. So if you're trying to miniaturize it, you should imagine it as seen from the ground level, looking up. But in all the pictures-- [pause, looking through book] See there?

Riess: The angle is down, yes.

Domoto: Yes. Evidently, according to this article, if they're working on the plant, they're supposed to be training to a triangle.

Riess: These are changing styles?

Domoto: Definitely. I was surprised.

Mr. [Dick] Derr is Chinese, and they have a book in Chinese-- this book just came out, and I had a glance at it last week--their style is a lot more severe right now. That is, instead of being full, the branches show very distinctly.

Riess: That's what I see here, a lot of layers.

Domoto: Yes. They show the layers and you see the branches. That was, I'd say, maybe about twenty years ago, the style of twenty years ago.

Riess: So they're returning to that style?

Domoto: Depends on where they're coming from. Whereas the Japanese ones, they were quite old and well-shaped--though now, they tell you the "quickie" way of doing it.

The trees are a lot younger in the Chinese ones. But they take an old stump or a stem or a root and graft a young stem on there, and then instead of waiting for the young stem to grow, they start twisting the young stem right away, and so the stump is visible. It looks all right, but when you know the age and everything, why, you see what you're camouflaging.

[Mr. Domoto, when this and some of the following passages are read back to him, is distressed that the average reader will not be able to make sense of what the fine distinctions are in different styles of bonsai.]

Everyone has a different idea. Commercially, if they put too much time in it, and they have to make it commercially pay, they can't do it. So everything is hurry up, in order to make it pay. And then the buying public doesn't know, so the result is that they can get by with murder.

Riess: But you would know?

Domoto: Oh, I could tell what I like, and what amount of work it's taken, and what was camouflaged. But then, most of the others wouldn't know. Because, unless they know how much work is on there--. Like I haven't seen the ones now, but Mr. Djer--he's not a bonsai expert or anything, he just likes plants, he works for AT&T--he tells me about the new Korean nursery that has opened down near San Martin, and they're importing plants from China, and pots from China. They copy the Japanese pots, but they're softer temper, so they are able to sell them a lot cheaper. The glaze isn't as good, but for the novice who doesn't know, it's a bonsai pot.

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Domoto: Bonsai is increasing in popularity--that's why you see all the magazines and books coming out. But it takes a lot of time and patience, and not everybody has that. It's like any craze--I'd say it was a craze. Eventually you find some group that has patience enough to work with it, a group develops. But right now it's like any new fad that comes along, like cars, or anything that pertains to life.

It's a difference in the nature of the person. When you get so you can't move around too much, and you have a feeling for certain plants, and you're working with it, and you're not worrying about making anything out of it, but just for the fun of working with it, to see how it evolves--.

One grower over on the San Mateo side, we were talking one day at a bonsai show. He used to be a chrysanthemum grower, and

he retired from that, so he was working with bonsai, and he had some pretty nice little ones. At that show they had a section that they called *suisaki* or water rock culture, rock display. They go out to the different areas, rivers, and collect rocks in certain forms that they imagine look like a mountain or oceanside, and they make nice little stands for it. And that's another hobby in itself.

I said, "Gee, how'd you get into rocks? From chrysanthemum to bonsai to rocks?" He said, "Well, I'm getting older. And I can't always get out to work on my plants, and nobody else will do it for me. And rocks," he said, "I don't have to water. And yet I can reminisce where I picked it up, or where I got it. Memories of happy moments get reflected back from the rock."

Riess: That's lovely.

It's interesting that you say bonsai has reached a new popularity now. Yet, you were offering bonsai in 1940, in the nursery. They were left from your father's stock?

Domoto: Some were, a few, but most we were starting to grow here.

Riess: Did you start them? Or did you buy them?

Domoto: No, there weren't any to buy, unless some person had some and wanted to sell some extra. I was getting one of the gardeners who was supposed to know something about it do the training for me.

Riess: One of your employees?

Domoto: Or our outside gardeners, whoever.

Riess: Did you start any from seed?

Domoto: No, very little from seed. Although I did later. The early part, I started buying mostly young plants that were already started, like what we call liner cuttings, one or two-year old seedlings. L-i-n-e-r-s. It means they were ready to line out in a row.

Riess: Did you ever buy from those people who go dig out old naturally-bonsaied plants in the Sierra?

Domoto: No, that's much later. Probably after the war.

We were more into getting the landscape-size trees. That's why some of these trees I had, they were kind of Oriental-shape. But bonsai actually are supposed to be small.

Riess: I have seen you posed beside a two-hundred-year-old Japanese maple in a tub. What is the history of that tree?

Domoto: That came in 1913 from Japan. [looking at picture] That's up at the Weyerhaeuser Pacific Basin Bonsai Collection.

Riess: How old is that tree?

Domoto: Well, when it came in 1913 from Japan for the 1915 Fair it came that way, in a terra cotta pot. The age--someone used to say, oh, it was about two hundred years old, and someone said one hundred.

When the top of it died I had to cut it off, cut it down to where it looked clear, and stabilize it. A professor at Berkeley came to look at the plant. He asked me what I was going to do with the branch that was cut, and I said I didn't know I was going to do anything, but it had enough of an interesting shape that I might do something. He said, "Could I have it?" I said, "Sure, what do you want to do with it?" I thought he wanted to do like I did, train something else on it.

He said, "I want to count the rings." So he took it, and he said as near as he could find out--he said actually, the annual rings are not always true because sometimes it doubles up--but as near as he could figure it was between seventy-five to eighty years old, way up there at the top.

The crown--[laughs] it's like a bald-headed man, but with hair [brushed] back over. This [in picture] is the crown from the other side, covering it. So I would judge that must be now at least two hundred years old.

Riess: When you were relocated during the war, Peter Milan kept these Oriental-shaped landscape trees going?

Domoto: Yes, it was just a matter of keeping them watered. So if some of them lost their shape, it was just a matter that I had to get someone to come and re-prune it and shape it. They were really not bonsai-shaped. They were more like irregularly-shaped plants.

Riess: A bonsai issue of the California Horticultural Journal came out in 1960 [Volume XXI, April-June 1960].

Domoto: Yes, that was really the beginning. In fact, I think it was Harriet Agard, she was one of the first of the group that had some plants that were really nice. She used to come out and look around, and if she would find a small one, she would buy a small plant to work on.

Riess: Would the plant already have started to take a shape?

Domoto: Some have, some haven't. They all would ask me what shape, and usually it was no shape at all. Oh, some would adhere to one of several styles of bonsai. If a branch was growing a certain way, branching, I would utilize that natural growth there and try to make it as close to that as possible. Obviously if it was growing with no shape at all I just let it grow. If they would ask me what style, "I don't know." Like all these plants here, they're not any style. Just let them grow like Eva--what is it, "grow like Topsy?"

Riess: But you would have made a first couple of cuts?

Domoto: No, most of the cuts are later. They come after they started to grow out and show something.

Riess: When they were in the liners?

Domoto: When I started to get liners, that was when I used to have, like some of the bonsai people, the gardeners doing bonsai, come in and train those for a quick sale, the small plants. Of course they weren't bonsai people either, they had just had a little artistic skill in the garden, and they'd come and work. And with the main part of the business I didn't have the time to do that.

Riess: What kind of gardeners were these?

Domoto: Just gardeners, taking care of yards and things, and that was part of their hobby.

Riess: Mr. H. Iseyama, whose garden is shown in this 1960 magazine, was he a friend?

Domoto: I think he was a graduate of the University of Japan, and also a teacher, teaching art in Japan. He was quite an artist besides. And he was one of the--not the first of the ones making Japanese gardens, I think he was a little later era. But I think he was probably the first one that really started a bonsai study group, and he used to have people come to his home and he gave them lessons in bonsai. He started some of my big trees, planting them out, showing me how to get started.

Riess: So he had something to offer you.

Domoto: He didn't have any plants to offer. But his skill and his art. In fact when I really got to know him, that was the period--you probably remember--when the florists used to carry all kinds of

ivy? I call it the "ivy rage," when everybody collected different kinds of ivy.

At that time they were looking for different shapes, not just plain hanging. So then I got an idea of forming the ivy in the bonsai shape. My first form was using five strands of baling wire and then twisting it to get branches, three or four or five tiers up. It was rather crude, but then when I told Mr. Isayama, he designed one for me. I had some frames made up by a wireworks, and I trained Hahn's ivy, that small-leaf ivy, and grew them in the greenhouse.

I think the first ones I grew--I didn't grow very many--I sold them all to Podesta's. They took the first bunch--I think the first year they showed them here--back to New York for the flower show back there, Macy's. Podesta used to do the Macy's show.

Riess: The New York Macy's show?

Domoto: Yes. They started out here, and then Macy's wanted them to do the show back there for them. They were doing the work here and then they would go back and supervise the flower show there.

Riess: How big were the trained ivy plants?

Domoto: Oh, they were small, nothing big. Although there were some--there was a fellow down in southern California, Japanese, but his was not bonsai, it was more topiary. He had the ivy in shapes of animals. Some of them were three feet, and some of them were larger. When Podesta's wanted to buy some from him to take to that show back there he wouldn't [was not equipped to] pack and ship them, so he trucked them up here to me to combine with the plants that I had sold to them to go to New York. That's how I happened to see these plants.

Riess: Did that take off as a sideline for you?

Domoto: Oh, it was a one-time interest.

Riess: We were tracking the bonsai craze. It has increased since 1960?

Domoto: Oh, yes. [shows interviewer a stack of the magazine, Bonsai Today]. This is a monthly. What number is this?

Riess: Twenty-one.

Domoto: Twenty-one would be about two years. It was a small magazine back there, and this man bought the magazine and has been publishing it

since. Actually, within the last ten years it is really becoming of more popular interest.

Riess: I see that the original edition of Bonsai Today is from Kyoto. Do they reproduce it?

Domoto: A lot of the pictures are reproduced, and some of the pages. Translated into English.

You'll see here, the thing that happens, almost all the nice-looking trees, they [the captions for the magazines] all state the age. That's because the popular belief is--. The first thing they ask, if it looks kind of good is, "How old is that tree?" That's the first question novices will ask, because they have been stressing the age of these specimens that they have. So everybody thinks that age has to be good.

Mr. Iseyama, at a Hort meeting, he was demonstrating with a cedar. And during the demonstration somebody asked, "Mr. Iseyama, how old is that tree?" He didn't answer her. Then whoever was down there in the audience at the time asked, "Mr. Iseyama, this lady wants to know how old is that tree?"

And Mr. Iseyama said, "When you see a beautiful woman walking down the street, do you go up to her and ask, 'How old are you?'" [laughs] I think that was the best answer. When a customer comes in and asks how old is a tree I relate that story to them. Age is there, but the beauty is not the age, it's the shape of the thing you're looking at. If you're looking for age, you can go out and buy a big old stump.

Riess: Or go see the ancient bristle-cone pines that I saw about a month ago at 10,000 feet in the Eastern Sierra.

Domoto: But you know, the bristle-cone pines, some of the seedlings that are growing stunted, those are runts of the ones that they go out and try to collect--if they can get a place where it's not a national park or something, and then try to establish that. In southern California, not the pines so much, because pines are hard to move, but the junipers, both in southern California and in northern California, junipers, they've been collecting those, and they've found some big old plants, weather-worn, and they've been working with those.

Riess: Like looking for pearls in oysters.

Domoto: Yeah, same idea. And at first, everything you find is good, but later you find out that when you bring it all home, you wonder,

"Why the hell did I bring this thing back?" You are so enthused with it at the time.

Actually, the collecting of the native trees started in northern California, and then the southern California group took it over, and they went to the foothills there, the hills, to get these things. And more lately I understand that they used to have hunting trips or digging trips, and they organize the group, and they pack in and they get all the plants back--one expedition they had where they had a helicopter come in and bring the plants out for them, so that they could be brought back and taken care of right away. And they would pack in and pack out.

Riess: Was that partly that they didn't want anyone to see their loot?

Domoto: No, it was, if you have to pack in these plants, how many can you pack out? Actually, the fellows that are going in, most of them are middle-aged or older, and to pack in their own food and tools, and to try to bring the plants out--. They probably couldn't bring more than one or two plants out.

Riess: I wonder how many people who buy bonsai become true students of bonsai.

Domoto: I think you could get one out of a hundred. That's my guess, that really stick with it. Most others, they come and buy one, they see it, it looks good, go and buy it for a friend or somebody for a gift, not knowing whether they like that or not.

Riess: Would you ever discourage someone?

Domoto: Yes. I try not to do much retailing, it's too hard. But some of them that come, I ask them, "Where do you want it, for indoors or outdoors?" If they say, "Indoors," I say, "Well, you can't keep it indoors forever." Then if they still want it, I try to discourage them of it.

Quite often you get a novice who's just starting, and is all enthused after seeing a bonsai show, and I say, "Well, before you get too far into it, first what kind of plants do you like?" You have to make up your mind what you like: do you like a conifer, or deciduous tree, or shade tree? Or grasses, and so forth? And also whether you like small plants or larger plants to work with.

Then after they make up their mind, then see what particular plants you like to work with. Don't try to be a master of all of

them. You can't. It's just like being an artist. You're either a modernist or a surrealist or cubist or whatever.

Riess: Do your customers stay in touch with you, then, after you make that contact with them?

Domoto: Some come back. I have ones that keep coming back maybe every other year to buy material. But others, most of them just--I'd say the average are one-time deals. Of course, I don't advertise I have bonsai, because that's more or less the last thing I started to do after I got out of the general nursery business.

Riess: What is most of the business here now?

Domoto: Nothing. Just getting rid of the stock I have. I'm not buying anything, I'm not even propagating. If someone wants to give me a rare cutting or something like that, which in the past I would grab at, right now I just cut that out all together.

Riess: How many people come in because they see your sign?

Domoto: I discourage that. I don't have the energy to teach them, to go around. Once in a while some come out, someone who really knows bonsai, and then they'll either bring them [other visitors] out or something like that. But otherwise, retail-wise--before, we didn't have that many people interested in bonsai. But now they go to a bonsai show, or read a magazine. Even the state fairs, county fairs, they have a bonsai section now.

When it first started, there was just--like the Alameda County Horticultural Society would have one section at the fair, at the Oakland Garden Show, and that was like someone who would exhibit a fern or geranium, whatever, the bonsai was just like one of those. I think the first show they held in the Exposition Building in Oakland is when they had really one section devoted to bonsai. That was I think Jack Dutra.

Riess: When was that?

Domoto: It was soon after the Exposition Building was finished. I think it was about the first or second show that they had there. That was in the days when Howard Gilkey was the designer for the shows.

Riess: Well before the war.

Domoto: Oh, yes. That must have been in the twenties, I guess.

And then the background--. They set up a table, and that's the first time they set up a background, a neutral background,

designed by I think Henry Matsutani, who was a landscape man. He designed the backdrop, and that was the first exhibit that the Garden Club of America awarded a prize to [in] a garden show west of the Mississippi.

Riess: It was the first time that bonsai had been displayed in a way that showed that they stood by themselves?

Domoto: Yes, especially in enough of a quantity to appreciate as such. They had been in a few other little exhibits, like in their own room where the club members were showing it. But that was the first one I'd seen where they really had a real display as such, as far as I know around here. They may have had some in southern California, but I think ours was the first, I guess it was, with the Garden Club of America giving out a trophy or medal or whatever they awarded, to an exhibit like that, associating themselves with it.

Riess: After Japan, and China, is America the first country where bonsai has been practiced? Or did it go from Japan to other countries?

Domoto: I think the European countries probably before US.

Riess: There are some Swiss practitioners.

Domoto: I think within the last, say, five years even, it's getting more international. Even the plants that my dad used to import from Japan for sale weren't brought in on a large scale. The few that were brought in used to go to New York for sale.

Riess: Your father was importing fully-grown bonsai?

Domoto: Not fully--mostly the smaller ones. And then most of them were cedars. The cedars were the most popular after the Chamaecyparis.

Riess: But how many years of growth would they have on them?

Domoto: Oh, they were well-trained plants.

Riess: Which would mean about how many years?

Domoto: Maybe the youngest one would probably be at least three or four years, the smaller--the younger plants. And the bigger ones, they were probably ten or fifteen years old. But even those, the ones that he got in, they weren't real big. The biggest ones probably would stand about table height. It wasn't until the time of the 1915 Fair that we brought the real big trees in, and that was brought in for the fair.

Riess: Do you think that in the early days when people were purchasing these trees, that they also--how much of the "mysterious East" did they think that they were going to get with it?

Domoto: Importing plants from Japan really stopped in '17 with the quarantine. Quarantine 37 went into effect right after War I. Then no more big plants coming in, nothing larger than eighteen inches. And they had to be plants that weren't too old, young plants, and they had to be brought in bare root and fumigated. That was just to get stock plants in for propagating.

Bonsai plants, plants shaped like bonsai, [were] almost impossible to bring in. You could bring it on on a permit, but the chances of survival were kind of poor.

Riess: I didn't ask my question right. I was asking more whether when someone buys a bonsai--it doesn't make any difference whether it's grown here or there--are they buying it because of an intrigue about Japan?

Domoto: No. I'd say it has nothing to do with East or West or south or north, it's getting to be international now. And the public itself, in fact even some of the commentators, didn't know the difference between bonsai and banzai! See, that's the era. It's only within the last--when these publications have been coming out--probably twenty years, they've started to talk about it.

Riess: To do bonsai, you have to have a state of mind. And it's that state of mind thing that I'm talking about.

Domoto: Well, that's not racial. It would be just an artist, whether he's American, English, German, Japanese, Chinese, a person who has the artistic--I don't necessarily say artistic, but eye for proper proportion, to create or see something that's pleasing to the eye.

Riess: And not to rush.

Domoto: Well, that part comes later. If you don't have the patience you might as well forget the bonsai, and grow annuals so you can go from seed to flower in six months, and that's it.

Riess: What if someone came to your nursery and you asked them what they liked, and they said they liked roses?

Domoto: Well, they can get roses. And even rose bushes, if they wanted to make bonsais out of them, they can. But it's going to take a lot more work. Now we have those miniature roses, and you can work those up into a shape. But a rose, every time it flowers you've got to prune it back. Whereas a conifer you keep shaping one way,

roses, even if they're not that small, they have to be treated just the same as you'd do there in the garden, and prune them.

I would say, except for the fact you get flowers to show, it's harder to--well, I've seen one magazine that I think says something about pruning bonsai with roses. But I haven't seen any except the miniatures that really looked like a--they used to show them in the flower shows at the nursery garden, in tubs or pots. You don't see any more now, but in the past, for Easter, we used to have these roses that were trained into a ball? I don't know if you remember those or not. And there used to be the Perkins rose, a climber, that we used to twist around this way or this way. [demonstrates]

Riess: So it's like one big bouquet?

Domoto: Yes, or more like a sphere. There were some pyramids, but most of them were spheres, because the rose would be hard to make a cone out of it. They were mostly the small Perkins type, small multiflora type of roses. They were trained, and then forced for Easter. That used to take time, and I don't think--I haven't seen any of those anymore. They went out with cost and handling.

Then they got to forcing the regular hybrid teas, and they're showing them. But you see, your rose show here by the clubs right now are mostly individual flowers that they're showing. Then they have a test garden, to show which variety will do well in that area. Outside of a few new ones that they will show, it's more of a bud vase show, where the individual flowers, or maybe a group of three or a dozen flowers of a variety will be shown. Roses as such in a garden, you don't have so much specimens. You have a rose garden, you have a bed of roses.

Riess: Did you ever handle roses?

Domoto: Yes. Not here, but when I started. That was the time when the Talisman rose first came out. That was the orange tri-color, copper-colored, very spectacular at that time, one of the first of the hybrids that came out. Everybody liked the flowers, so I grew some of those just sort of as pot plants. Most of it as pot plants. But outside of that they don't--I think that was about the only rose I was growing in my place here.

My folks, in Oakland, we used to buy these dormant roses for the garden sale. Dormant roses generally, like Talisman, were bought for one spring sale, like Easter, and we used to train the roses for Easter. But most of the roses in the greenhouse were for cut flowers.

Riess: Roses have lots of problems.

Domoto: Well, it's such with anything else that you grow.

Riess: [laughs] One of my summer jobs was removing Japanese beetles from our roses in Pennsylvania. How did the Japanese beetle get to this country?

Domoto: Probably came in on some plants or something. They say that it may have come in when the plants were imported with soil intact, the ball. I never followed up on that. There are different versions of how it might have come in.

Riess: It's a beautiful, hard, green beetle.

Domoto: Oh, as far as beetles, I think if a person is interested in collecting beetles, they're the most interesting of insects. Even more beautiful than the butterflies. Butterflies are spectacular, but little beetles, their colored designs are a lot more interesting.

Riess: That's a good attitude for a nurseryman, too. [laughs]

Domoto: Well, nature--the thing you like, it might be a pest, but it's part of--if I had just gone from the nursery without having had to take a course in entomology I probably wouldn't notice the details of a beetle. But in college we had to take one basic science course, and the one I went into was entomology. And they had good professors, and the class was small, so we had to collect all different kinds of insects and then mount them for a semester program.

A lot of them went in for butterflies, and I liked the butterflies fine, I used to pin them up too, but when I started to see the different collections of beetles that they had at Stanford, especially even some of them you had to look under glass to see the color, I said, "Well, that's a lot easier. I don't need a big box. I can just have a bunch of them on a small tray." I used to know the different families or species. I've forgotten all those. I remember the markings of most of the beetles.

Riess: It sounds like an important class to take for someone interested in horticulture, because it's an important relationship, beetle and plant.

Domoto: These days, they don't spend that much time. They might have a general course in whatever, gardening, they go into, and all they have to know is whether it's a flying insect or a burrowing insect or a beetle, or whatever.

- Riess: Or they might even get more simple-minded and say whether it's a good one or a bad one.
- Domoto: That's basic, whether it's a harmful or non-harmful. And then the next thing is, how you control it, if they're going into a nursery. So that they might now--you bring a sample in and ask them, they should know whether it's a beetle or a sucking insect or something else, and know what spray to sell. But even the sprays are getting more general, so the buyer doesn't have to know--just spray it, and it's an all-purpose spray.
- Riess: I have been fighting strawberry root weevil, and the books say that they're practically impossible to eradicate. In fact I finally had to give the plant up, because I couldn't fight it.
- Domoto: Well, you can, but you have to be persistent.
- Riess: I fought it by taking the individual beetles off, but I had no way of dealing with the larval stage.
- Domoto: No. You have to control the beetles as they emerge and get them at that stage. If you decimate the adult population, then you don't have any more eggs or whatever comes. We used to have trouble with that, with camellias, and azaleas and rhododendron, they would girdle the bark on the stem. And as soon as that girdling was complete, the tree would go. My dad used to raise both azaleas and camellias in the ground, and we tried sprays and that, but it didn't do much good. Finally, the only thing was just to hand-pick them. I got so that--

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- Riess: You said he was paying you so much a bug for these.
- Domoto: And then I found out that they only emerged from the ground up into the trees or the bushes about just after dusk, around seven o'clock. By ten o'clock they had gone back into the ground again. So I used to take a flashlight and go out there, pick them up in a can.

Like on the camellias and azaleas, they'd eat the perimeter of the leaf, and if there was a full moon scallop on the end, you'd know that you had the beetle. If it was a big scallop, you'd know it was a cutworm. But if there was only a half-moon around the edge, real dainty, you had that. So you had to go and instead of trying to catch them on the top, put your hands underneath them before you try to grab them. Otherwise, they drop to the ground, and you won't find them. Because most bugs, when they hit the ground, they try to scatter. If they drop, they just

stay there, and they're the same color as the soil at night, and you can't find them.

Riess: My neighbors have seen me out at night, in the dark, in my nightgown, with the flashlight!

Domoto: Yes. You're nuts!

Riess: And it's still a kind of a last-ditch effort.

Domoto: Yes. But if you keep at it for several years, the population doesn't increase. And then, gradually it decreases, and then [combining] that with spraying something on the foliage, something that they eat, it would poison them. But it's hard to get the spray on the foliage, and I forget what the spray was, but it kind of discolored, like the camellia or rhododendron, the foliage; if you spray it, customers wouldn't buy it, because it had the spray on it.

Riess: Is my notion correct that if the conditions are really good for a plant, and it is really healthy, that it is not vulnerable to strawberry root weevils?

Domoto: Oh, they'll thrive more! Sure, because they have more to eat. It's a matter of food.

Riess: But scale, for instance, only comes on a sick plant, doesn't it?

Domoto: No. The plant gets sick because the scale is on there. It's the other way around. Any foliage or vegetative matter, whatever it is the insects or pests want, they like the most lush, just like human beings.

The plant may go into distress because it gets dry, or the insect starts disturbing some part of the structure, either the foliage or stem or root. Then if the plant looks kind of distressed, and you look and you find insects, you blame the insects, but [the real cause was] you might have allowed the plant to get dry in the first place.

Riess: Before the machine was on we were talking about this tree on the table, and I want you to describe it for the tape recorder. Tell me what it is. You said it was not a Norway spruce?

Domoto: It's a cultivar. I think it's listed in the catalogues as a dwarf Norway spruce. [Picea albertiana conica]

Riess: Did you start it from a cutting?

Domoto: No. We used to buy those in the Northwest. This is one of the dwarf conifers we used to buy for gardeners. And still, in some of the older gardens, they will be a very even cone shape, and very compact. In fact, I have a couple of them. I think you noticed the last time in the first section of the trees we have one there. It's about this high.

Riess: About five feet.

Domoto: Four or five feet. It's a very slow grower, and it more or less makes a natural cone. The only difference [with this bonsai] is I just thinned out the branches to open it, so instead of being a full tree it gives more of a feeling of age when you see the trunk.

Riess: And the two spurs?

Domoto: I was trying to make a grove, and one of them is dead. I think this one's surviving. It's like that big redwood seedling out there in the garden. That's a good example. They both started off the same, but one got all the nourishment.

You know, sometimes in a multi-trunk deal they'll strip one branch to make it look like a tree that's been struck by lightning or something, so that you have a live tree and dead tree.

Riess: I thought that was what you were trying to do here.

Domoto: No, not actually. It was accidental--[laughs] incidental to trying to hurry up and get a grove of three growing again.

Riess: That's part of what I'm talking about, about the mystery of it. I would just assume that everything that is there is exactly what you intended, but you're saying to me, not quite.

Domoto: No. Because you work with plants--. If you're an artist, you can sketch it, and if you don't like it, you can blot it out. Plants, you can't do that with, you just have to wait for it to grow. And the other, of course, even if you plant a bunch of seedlings together, it's like people with children. You can have triplets, all the same mother and father, and yet they can have different sizes, different habits. Trees are the same way. Even though they're the same species, one starts growing faster.

Riess: What are all the tags that are hanging from this plant?

Domoto: Oh, I put that on at the time when I transplant it or when I first prune it, or feed it, so I know what has been done. When you have a lot of them, you can't remember what you did when. While I was

doing a lot of pruning I'd use a certain color tag, and I knew that was the spring pruning or summer pruning. Like now I'm pruning some junipers, and it's really too late now for the spring pruning but I just have to do it when I have a chance to do it.

Riess: You have to think about seasons when you have bonsai?

Domoto: Oh, definitely. For instance, a flowering tree, if you prune at the wrong time you're cutting the flowers off, so you don't get any flowers. If you prune it too late, you only get the new growth, so you don't refurbish. And if you transplant at the wrong time you'll either have a setback or it will die. So you have to be a plantsman besides just shaping.

Riess: You can't assume that because you've taken over the life of this tree, that it's not going to hear the call of nature?

Domoto: Well, generally, in the animal world, suppose you buy a young puppy. Someone tells you when to feed it, how much to feed it, when to worm it and all that. But you don't know the basics behind it, how it was bred or anything like that. You just got a puppy, and if you have time with it you'll probably train it to fetch the ball or something, or get the paper.

And the trees are the same way. Unless you get to know the nature of how it's treated, the tree is going to die. Only, it doesn't tell you, "I'm hungry, I'm thirsty." A live animal, at least if you get to know them, they let you know when they're hungry or when they're thirsty.

Riess: It's amazing to look at that and realize that it's growing. It seems so finished.

Domoto: The whole thing is, in bonsai, you're supposed to have the plant look as though it was that plant in miniature. And I think that the reason that the bonsai as such in Japan appeals to Occidental taste is because it's a more finished miniature.

Where the bonsai first started, it evolved from China into Japan, and they've cultivated it. It's like many of the Chinese artists' pictures, they're very simple. Unless you know what you're looking at, it doesn't mean anything. The same with some of the Chinese bonsai. After the war, there were some brought in from China, by way of Hong Kong or wherever they came from. Some were just like that piece there [points], a stem about eighteen to twenty-four inches long, and heavily carved, a deciduous tree, I don't know what it was. It looked just like a piece of stump to me. I didn't know why they would call that bonsai, but well, I guess that's what it is.

Later, much later, within five, six years or so, maybe four years now, a man from Hong Kong came, well-educated. We started talking about bonsai. I said, "How come the Chinese bonsai pictures as such are so severe?" "Oh," he said, "bonsai actually is trying to reproduce nature in the miniature." That's what it is. They're trying to miniaturize or make a replica of trees and shrubs that are growing in nature, in their own area. And in most of China, it being an old country, all of the woods have been cut off, forests have been cut off, and the stumps are left. And when they can't get wood they go out and chop parts of the dead wood for firewood.

So that's where the slashings on the wood [came from]. They don't see what the tree was before it was cut down, the next younger generation, several generations younger. And so if they're trying to make something look like nature, why, here is this old stump that's been chopped off. That was the first time I understood why there was a difference in the shapes of bonsai.

Even this--not this book that just came out, but in this--I think they must have a Chinese library in Oakland where they have books you can take out. This book here is one that I think was written by someone in China, and it was financed by some rich banker in Hong Kong. And the offer came out in one of the first American magazines: anyone donating I think it was either fifteen or twenty-five dollars to the Methodist missionary group in China, they would send you the book free. (Later they re-edited it and decided to sell it direct from there.)

But in this book, they had a Chinese section, and then the Japanese section of the bonsai, and they're almost entirely different. It was just like looking at modern art and surrealist art and cubist art.

Riess: The Japanese were trying in their bonsai to do something that was intrinsically beautiful?

Domoto: No, it wasn't that. I don't think so much beautiful, but I think that--you know, beauty, you don't try to make anything beautiful. That comes with it. It's a by-product. You don't try to make something beautiful. You're trying to reproduce something which you think looks good.

I think most of that is they were trying to recreate the trees in miniature of what they saw in Japan. And a lot of the trees, the shapes were the ones they would find on the mountain sides. They hadn't been cut down. They were more or less copying nature as they saw it. And because of the size, the area, of the homes, they had to make the plants smaller in order to make them fit into their gardens.

V JAPANESE GARDENS, FAMILY, AND HOME

Rock Gardens. Kaneji Domoto

Domoto: About thirty years ago, I got to know a Chinese artist who was in one of the groups that had to leave China when the Communists took over. They went to Japan, they went to Brazil. When I got to know them, they had built a home on the 17-Mile Drive. You couldn't buy a home [right] on the 17-Mile Drive, but the subdivision just before the 17-Mile Drive.

They built a home there, and they had one of the local nurserymen put in a Japanese, Oriental rock garden. Even after he finished, something was wrong. He didn't like it. My brother was doing landscaping back East, and he knew about this artist, he had seen some of his paintings back East. And he went to see what the garden was doing, because [the Chinese man] was buying plants at the same time my brother came out here.

My brother looked at the garden and he [the Chinese man] asked him what was wrong. He said, "The shape is there, but something's wrong." My brother looked at it and he said, "The rocks are placed wrong." He asked [my brother] if he could stay and fix it, but my brother had a job that he was working on back in New York, and he said he had to finish that first. He said, "After that, I'll probably come out."

So he said, "What do you charge?" He said, "Oh, I won't charge you, but you have to pay my fare out." But he told the Japanese nurseryman doing the landscaping the kind of rock he should try to find, to place in the garden. He asked about the size, and the shapes, and said when he came back, he'd help place it.

I think my brother said he [the nurseryman who had laid out the garden] had been making small Japanese gardens in an average

residential home, which was very small, where this was a real big garden. Putting the rocks in the same way, it didn't do anything. The main mistake he had made was, when he made the pool you could see the cement. That's what hurt, that the artist didn't like. He didn't want to see the cement.

The main rocks that my brother had the nurseryman get for him were large enough to go over the pool edge, and then there would be rock and water, but no cement showing. And especially in the main spot. If it had been quarried, you could arrange for the walls, so they wouldn't show so much. But since it was made like a swimming pool, he had to kind of hide it.

When they got through replacing the rocks and putting a few major plants in, the artist was so pleased. He had a financial interest in a Chinese restaurant that was just going to be built in Monterey, and so they had a dinner in his honor.

Riess: In your brother's honor?

Domoto: Yes. Because he was so pleased with the garden.

Riess: That's a good story. Where did your brother study?

Domoto: He went to UC Berkeley--Cal--for a while. Then, when the '39 Treasure Island exhibit came in, the Exposition, the garden group from Japan, the artisans that came, they wanted workers to help do the manual work in the garden. So they came out in this area and hired I think about five or six boys in their twenties or college age, most of them sons of nurserymen or farmers in this area. I think there were six or seven of them. One of them was a son of a laundryman, and I think the other two, or three, were flower growers, and one was a farmer's son.

Anyway, they worked in putting in a garden on Treasure Island. The group that came [from Japan]--one knew how to place rocks, another one about the plants, and the other was a PR [public relations] man. One designed the general design. The building part was a different group from the landscaping part.

My brother had been doing some work around before in gardens. Then when he got working, he liked working with rocks, and the fellow that was placing the rocks, he worked under him. So he learned about the placement and everything. And certain kinds of trees to choose.

When they finished installing the garden on Treasure Island, they were going to New York to start the garden there for the World's Fair. They said to him, "Why don't you come to New York

and help us?" They had difficulty speaking English, and my brother couldn't speak too much Japanese, but at least they could communicate and translate what had to be done in English to the laborers that had to come in.

So finally he went to New York there, and he found out he couldn't get in to work in the World's Fair because they had a union. But it so happened that the nurseryman there, a Japanese nurseryman supplying the plants for the Japanese exhibit, was unionized, so he signed him up, and he was able to work there. He had two major garden displays of different kinds of rock and things to work with.

Then after that I think he--he was studying architecture, so then he went to Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin [in Wisconsin] and studied there, and then he went down to Arizona [Taliesin West], and worked there. And they were building it in the early days, so they had to learn carpenter work and everything.

Riess: You mean he was a regular student of Frank Lloyd Wright's?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: So he went back into serious study of architecture at that point.

Domoto: Oh, no--he didn't go back to college any more. I think he had two years of college.

Riess: But he was an apprentice of Wright's for a while?

Domoto: Yes. They were--they had another name for it. But actually, it was apprentice worker on the buildings.

Riess: I went to Taliesin recently, and they talked about the building of it, and how they were trying to mix the building blocks out of the local materials. It was a great challenge for the students.

What is your brother's first name?

Domoto: Kaneji.

Riess: You and your brother have both kept your Japanese names. Your father and his brother took American names.

Domoto: Both I and my brother never got a Christian name. They used to call it Christian names; the Anglo-English name would be called Christian name. We never--. He just shortened his name to Kan, and my name is always any name they could figure out out of the letters I had.

Riess: Was it was necessary in some way for your father and his brother to get along in business to have Christian names?

Domoto: It wasn't a matter of getting business. The workers they worked with, it was hard to remember their names, so they decided to give them the easiest names they could remember, like Tom, Henry, Frank, Joe, Harry.

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Domoto: And then their name became part of their legal names, too. Instead of Tom, it was Thomas, Harry was Harry, of course, and Frank was Frank.

Riess: Did they get so they called each other by their Christian names?

Domoto: No. It would be Kane-san, Motono-san, I guess. I don't remember otherwise.

Riess: And your brother, after he finished his apprenticeship, or his period of working with Wright, then he went into business in landscape architecture?

Domoto: Yes. And I think because of his association with Wright, he decided that if he would ever design a house for anybody, unless he got the contract to do the landscaping along with it, that he wouldn't take the job. I think there's one house he designed that way. Then he got more and more into the landscape side of it.

Riess: And he stayed on the East Coast?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Where was he during the war?

Domoto: In camp, same as we were. Then when we went out, he went East. Most of the work he did was up in Connecticut, and Florida, and down into-- . I think he had a job in Jamaica, one of those West Indies islands; he went down to do the landscaping for the hotel complex, and then also he put in the garden for the owner down there.

One of the first gardens he did in New York was for a professor who was interested in gardens, and my brother did some gardening work for him.

Riess: Did he work with any of the botanical gardens?

Domoto: No. I don't think so. Not as such.

Japanese Gardens. Expositions

- Riess: There is a quite wonderful garden near Philadelphia called Swiss Pines, that is a Japanese garden.
- Domoto: Most of those early [Japanese] gardens back East and in the middle West, they were started--if you look up the history you find out it was in connection with some fair, like international fairs sometimes.
- Riess: I'm sure you're right, because it's along Fairmont Parkway and that's probably from some Philadelphia exposition.
- Domoto: The one he built on Treasure Island of course was taken down altogether, because the war came along and that became a naval station, so they needed buildings and so forth.

Those gardens have changed. Even the ups and downs of the tea garden in Golden Gate Park. See, that was really for the Exposition in I think 1890 [1894 California Midwinter International Exposition]. But then the '15 Fair came along, and they kind of enlarged it a little bit and did some remodeling. And then during the '39 Fair--buildings deteriorate and they had to rebuild part of it. But the old Moon Bridge--that's the picture you see, "Japanese Tea Garden," that's the thing that they emphasized.

- Riess: Did your father have anything to do with the Japanese Tea Garden?
- Domoto: Oh, the plants he imported in '13 from Japan, one of the maples, a Pacific Basin maple. But the big cedars that were imported from Japan--. My father got the contract to supply the plants for the Formosan exhibit, but the Japanese garden was by another landscape man. My father supplied the plants, he didn't do any designing of it.

The Fair, 1915, and the Cousins

- Riess: That gets us back to where we stopped last time. What do you remember of the Fair? How much time did you spend there?
- Domoto: I think there was one trip we took over as a student group, school group. And the other time, the family group would go. Some of the buildings I remember, one was the Hawaiian building, in a very tropical setting. And then the Zone. And, the other was--

[pause] not the science building, but food, or something, where they passed out a lot of free samples. [laughs]

The Hawaiian building I remember because I went with my cousin and their tutor in Japanese from Japan who was an ex-lieutenant in the army. He'd take us around to make sure [we saw what we should]--but in sort of the leisure time in the afternoon, my cousin was a natural musician, and we would sneak off to the Hawaiian building and hide there and listen to the Hawaiian music. That's the ukelele and the guitar with that soft, drawly music. We'd stay there and just listen.

Then this tutor would come looking for us. He knew where to find us. And I still remember the remark that he made to my cousin. He said, "For you young Japanese sons to be in the Hawaiian building, you'll never become men." He used this word, in translation, he said, "Your testicles will drop off." [laughter] In other words, you won't be a man if you stick around for that lazy [music]. You ought to be more militant and more strident, not lazy, letting the world come by.

Riess: He was the tutor?

Domoto: Yes, he was employed by my aunt [Matsue] to tutor her children. He didn't tutor us, but when they were taking their family over to the fair, I was included to go with them. And he talked in Japanese with us.

Riess: Your aunt did this so that her children would not lose the old ways?

Domoto: Well, she had an entirely different outlook, I guess you'd say, on life. I think she was from the Kyoto part of Japan, and she always said they had to learn Japanese. Her family used to travel quite a bit. They had a home in Oakland, two homes I know of in Oakland, and then they moved back East. Her children all went to private schools, that kind of thing. My older cousin, they had a military academy in Belmont, and he went there, and then they went back East.

I think neither one of them [boy cousins] finished college, but the oldest girl, she was a Wellesley graduate. And after the war in Japan, she was doing the screening for the scholarships for Japanese students coming to the US, and then also American students going to Japan. She was the Fulbright director in Japan. My folks always used to say, "Too bad she wasn't born a male instead of a female."

Riess: Because she could have gotten even further?

Domoto: Well, gone into their business, which was importing and exporting. Their boys, they were ordinary, they didn't have the drive and the insight that she did. But she made a place in history.

Riess: The role of the oldest child in the Japanese family is very important, isn't it?

Domoto: Well, it's like any of the older civilizations, the oldest one generally--like the royal family, the oldest son becomes the next in reign--and it's the same in Japan.

Riess: You say that this aunt had a different attitude. How would you characterize that attitude?

Domoto: Well, probably it's the difference between a merchant and a farmer. My father and mother, they were both from more or less the agricultural group, and she [my aunt] felt that for her children to succeed, they had to learn to get along with the people who were higher up, sort of high society.

Riess: So she was doing everything to move them up a step.

Domoto: Yes, in a foreign country, or in Japan to be international.

My father and mother felt that if you were going to make a living in America you have to live with the common people, to know them. Otherwise you'll have a hard time, unless you have funds or something, or go into international work. I'd say they were more realistic, because he was in a nursery and he was importing and exporting.

So, instead of going to private school I went through all public schools. In fact, the school I went to in Oakland had just been completed, the first one I went to, Melrose Heights, in about 1910, I guess, because I was eight years old when I first went to grammar school.

Home Training. Religion. Social Groups

Riess: Yet your parents were ambitious for you?

Domoto: I don't think they were trying to tell us anything, but they just brought us up the way they did, instead of trying to tell us that we should be this way or that way.

My mother taught us the Japanese alphabet very early. Later the families were able to get other people who were either teachers or good scholars who could teach Japanese. But my basic Japanese, learning the alphabet, what little I knew of the Japanese alphabet, I learned from my mother.

We were building greenhouses at the time, and when they cut the bars off there would be little pieces of wood shaped like a flat building block, and she had us cover them with rice paper. She showed us how to mix the rice paste, take the rice, boiled rice, and make glue out of it, and then we would paste the Japanese rice paper over the top of it. Then she was the one that used to write the alphabet on each block. That was the A, B, Cs of Japanese on those blocks. That's how I learned my fundamental Japanese.

Riess: Did your family attend a Buddhist church?

Domoto: No. I was never a church-goer.

Riess: And they were not either?

Domoto: No, my folks were not. I have gone to several different churches, but that was because of my association with Caucasian friends, and going with them. I've gone to Lutheran, Methodist. The most severe was Seventh-Day Adventist. And I visited Catholic churches, I just kept going as a visitor, and when they wanted me to take communion, "Nah." I couldn't see it.

Riess: Were you looking for a religion?

Domoto: No. I went because my friend's family, or friend, probably had to go, to attend Sunday school. Because of companionship he'd say, "Come on with me," and because there was nothing else to do on a Sunday.

Riess: That was during grade school.

Domoto: Oh, yes, grade school. By the time I got to high school I never went, and college, church-wise only through the--I guess it was called International Club.

Riess: What was the International Club?

Domoto: International used to be sort of a social club at Stanford, any denomination--it was more really international, trying to get students from different nations, nationalities, to attend it. I think the fellow who was the leader in that was--I don't even remember what denomination he was.

Mother's Life, and Traditions

Riess: Did your parents belong to Japanese clubs or organizations when they came here?

Domoto: No, there was nothing like that. And they were all the way out in the country, and any of the clubs were in the city, San Francisco. Nothing was in Oakland. So my mother grew up almost like an exile in that respect. Feminine companionship was limited except for one or two woman servants that came in to help the family.

Riess: Is that something you think about now? Do you think she was unhappy about it?

Domoto: I think at times--I never realized it then, because we were busy all the time in the family--at times, I think she felt a little lonesome. But she had the ability to try to do things for people, and I think that was her outlet in there. Never trying to be a show-off or a boss or anything, but in her quiet way, she used to help whoever was in trouble.

Riess: And that would include your Caucasian neighbors?

Domoto: Some, but most of them were Japanese, workers or wives or some of the other people here from Japan for a while. Probably they'd come to see her because they were lonesome.

The Japanese church as such--I guess the Buddhist churches were about the first to get started, have a branch, and that was probably in San Francisco. Then in the Oakland area--in San Francisco too, but in the Oakland area--I guess the Methodists were about the first.

Riess: And to have a sermon with a Japanese-speaking minister?

Domoto: Oh, most of those, the Methodists and the Buddhists were in Japanese, because the attendants were mostly older people. And the youngsters, if they had to go. The Buddhist group had--I think there were two divisions, just like the Methodist north and Methodist south, two entirely different outfits. It was two groups of those.

Riess: At home, did you have--is it a takenomo--the shrine?

Domoto: No. Because I think basically my father and mother were both Christian.

Riess: They had been converted in Japan?

Domoto: No, I don't think they were there long enough to be converted really. They came before they got--. But I think partially because some of the friends or associations here. You know, as far as the--. We used to have some of the things they used in the shrine, like for burning incense. About the only time I remember burning incense is when we went to a funeral.

Riess: How about Boys' Day and Girls' Day?

Domoto: That we used to celebrate when we got older. My mother had some Girls' Day toys from Japan that she had sent to her, and then we imported some others, bought some. Then for the Boys' Day she had the carpenter that was building our buildings, building greenhouses for my dad, a Japanese carpenter, he made a nice little stand for both different days, and we had the different dolls.

And I think later, after War II, what we did, we divided the toys. My sisters took the girls' dolls and each one took a choice to divide those. The boys'--I think most of them we donated to some museum. Because some of those were quite old by the time we got them.

Riess: And the other thing on Boys' Day is to have the carp flying?

Domoto: Yes. Most of those are made in Japan, of course. To me, it didn't mean anything, except I thought that it did, so we did it. Of course, later, I learned what was carp was supposed to symbolize.

Riess: Long life?

Domoto: Well, not so much long life as--probably that was one of the things, but I think just the ability of the carp to swim upstream against the obstacles. At least, that was one of the things I was taught about the carp.

The House at New Ranch

Riess: What was your house like when you were at the New Ranch? Did you build it?

Domoto: At that time my uncle [Mitsunoshin]--that was my Uncle Harry--was getting married, and they had built one of those big, high two-story buildings for them to move in as newlyweds. But they never moved in at all. They went to Japan, because I think he got TB;

they went to Japan and never came back. Although it was built for them, we moved in. We had moved it from one corner of the nursery property to the other, to be closer to the greenhouse area, and we had moved into that house.

Riess: Really?

Domoto: Yes, from 78th Street. We moved it what would have been about six blocks, across the forty-eight acres of the nursery property.

It was one of my mother's dreams when we were going to the New Ranch to have a house more like the one she would like, rather than a house that was built for nursery convenience where you had living quarters that were on the second floor, and one of the bigger rooms downstairs was used to feed the help--the help would feed off the same kitchen. In the new place, a kitchen was set up separately for the employees.

This house, I guess my aunt was instrumental picking out the design. But it was one of those high Victorians with a high basement, so it was almost like a three-story house. And between the second and third story there were eighteen steps, and a banister, and I used to like to slide down the banister. But that was a long way down, and if you went too fast you'd fall on your butt!

Riess: Did it have nice Victorian details?

Domoto: In some respects. Kind of scalloped [eaves]. An upper porch where you could go outside, and a second, main porch. And a big living room. And then another room, and later that room was cut, partitioned, so you could have a study room--a room where you could study.

Riess: Did your mother keep a garden there?

Domoto: She didn't have much time for that. That was done by whoever was helping around the house. They would put the garden in. I don't know if she did too much of that. The help used to do the vegetable garden.

VI NURSERY BUSINESS, CONTINUED

Azaleas

Riess: When we finished last week, you showed me a photograph of a nursery in Japan that had a complete collection of Kurume azaleas?

Domoto: It wasn't a nursery; that was the exhibition of the Kurume Society in Japan that had this show. That was prior to my father getting the exclusive import right for the Kurume azaleas to the West.

Riess: Does that mean that your father's was one of the biggest operations here, that he got that?

Domoto: I would say in importing plants from the Orient, we were about the largest.

Riess: He went back to Japan to negotiate this business?

Domoto: His brothers used to go back, but most of the process was by mail. Even for the plants that came for the Exposition, the 1915 Fair, that was by correspondence.

We used to import things every year--fruit trees and so on--but I would say his main contribution was the introduction with the Cottage Gardens of the Kurume azaleas from Japan. They were first importation of Kurume azaleas to the U.S. Prior to that our main importing was the commoner shrubs of that time, like camellias, daphnes, and the red--I think it was called the Sunrise azalea.

Riess: These Kurume azaleas, are they a parent strain of the azaleas we see all over now?

Domoto: No. Azalea was very wide-spread. They have azaleas all over this country.

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Domoto: Even in Japan, the azaleas in the southern part of Japan, and the Kurume from the northern part, the species are entirely different. They have small flowers and are very compact. And in fact I guess a lot of the Japanese themselves, they didn't know too much about the Kurume azaleas until they started to have a show there.

Riess: Was there a lot of color variation in the Kurumes?

Domoto: The Kurumes are the first ones I think that had color variation. Most of the others, like your Southern Indicaa, they were mostly purple, white, the two colors. But the Kurumes have more of the shape--shape, size, and color--and then habit of growth. They were more compact growing. You can see from pictures, they were more like the bonsai type.

Riess: Was his intention when he got the license to do some hybridizing too?

Domoto: No, no hybridizing. We got them in, and then it was a matter of propagating from those plants, and then introducing them to the trade. We did our own propagating. We kept the Japanese name on them to sell here, but we were never able to do much propagating.

Riess: Why not?

Domoto: Well, the conditions, and not knowing how to propagate. We didn't know anything about peat moss; we just planted them in heavy adobe, and we lost a lot of stock plants. Whereas, the plants we sent to Eureka, they [Cottage Gardens] had started a nursery up there because they were looking for a section in the U.S. where the climate would be more equal to the climate of Holland or Belgium. And also, where they could find the right kind of soil. They used to bring in redwood leaf mold from the forest in big truckloads to put the plants in, so they grew well.

We didn't know about peat moss until much later. Then we started to get the German peat moss, and started to work that into the soil, but that wasn't until much, much later. We were just planting in the heavy adobe, and the heavy adobe earth didn't--the plants would survive, but then never improve.

Riess: So that didn't turn out to be very successful?

Domoto: As far as the commercial propagation of azaleas, that's right. We were never able to get into full force with them. We could buy the plants from Cottage Gardens for resale a lot better than we could grow ourselves.

Riess: Cottage Gardens is Charles Ward's company in Eureka?

Domoto: Yes.

Camellia Trees

Riess: When we looked at your album, we also saw some of the handsome plantings at the state capitol building in Sacramento. What were you telling me about them?

Domoto: In US history, plants go through various stages of popularity. Those trees I guess are probably not the first camellia trees that were planted in California, but some of the varieties were some probably that my dad had imported before. But then before that, a number of them used to be imported from either Germany or England, and they were planted.

Those trees in the capitol grounds, when Sacramento was being developed, eastward out of the capitol area, some of the old homes, just like in Oakland or Berkeley, the old, fashionable homes where either people had passed on or the buildings were going to be demolished to put new buildings in, and the trees--the capitol building I think had just been built, and the area was rather barren, and the landscapers decided that they would get the camellia plants that people didn't want. The state would pick them up and plant it.

The gardener at that time was a camellia enthusiast, and I guess the Camellia Society of Sacramento also thought it was a good idea, so they helped instigate the popularity of that idea. A number of the old trees were donated. Even some of the--I guess they used to plant camellias in the graveyards, cemeteries, and some of those would get too big, so some of those were even taken out of the cemetery. The cemetery association would let them take it out, and the plant was either taken out altogether or replaced with some lower growing plants, because they were getting too big. So they went into the capitol area there.

Riess: Was your father the contractor for that?

Domoto: Oh, no, no. That was just an incident in history. We got to know about it because that was the period where camellias were getting popular. We used to go around to shows, or wherever we could find out what variety that we could get, plants that we either could buy or get cuttings from.

Riess: How long can a camellia live?

Domoto: Long. I don't know if they still have it, but the Coe collection in, I think, Massachusetts, the Coe family, they have one of the first 'Alba Plena' [japonica] camellias in there, and over there they're a strictly indoor plant, because it gets too cold. Also they had the reticulata. And I understand the greenhouse has had to be heightened at least three times to accommodate the growth habits of the original plant.

Plant Enthusiasms. and Determinants

Domoto: You see, there again, the period of plant popularity--I can kind of visualize the stages of different things that are popular. I remember as a youngster, the only plants we got from Japan or imported from Belgium or Holland would be these very tight azaleas. You don't see many in the florist shops now, because they're too expensive. The azaleas--mostly azaleas, a few rhododendrons. That was when the 'Pink Pearl' rhododendron first came out, and the botanists couldn't figure it out. The rhododendron was so large that it just took over.

Riess: I thought 'Pink Pearl' was an azalea.

Domoto: 'Pink Pearl' has a lot of different plants named after it.

And then the other plant as a house plant--and then also planted outside--was the araucaria. You know, they're very tiered. They used to get it and think it would be nice for a house plant, and then they would plant it out in the garden somewhere. Those are more or less the popular plants.

And then along about '14 or '15, that's when they used to start getting the trimmed boxwoods--boxwood, bay trees--

Riess: Oh, and the laurels.

Domoto: Grecian laurel.

Riess: People started wanting these trimmed shapes?

Domoto: Oh, that was what was available. They came already trimmed. They had the regular pyramid shape, and then they had the globe, and then they had the standards. Globe was the common shape, and once or twice they had some that were trained into more or less animal or bird shapes, but those were more as a novelty deal.

Riess: And where would they be coming from?

Domoto: Most of them were already grown and from Belgium.

Riess: Is there any tradition in Japan of animal-shaped trees?

Domoto: I don't think so. Shaping a tree into animal shapes I think must be European, either German or English. But as far as commercial exportation to the U.S., Belgium was the country that got into the production of those plants.

Riess: Quarantine 37 was a quarantine against all countries, not just imports from Japan, was it?

Domoto: No, no, worldwide. It was international.

Riess: When did hydrangeas become popular, and did your father deal in hydrangea, too?

Domoto: It was really for the 1915 Fair, I guess, was the double one that they named Domoti, that was the double otaksa variety [Hydrangea macrophylla otaksa var. domoti].

Riess: Is that still available?

Domoto: It comes on the market every once in a while. I think about four or five years ago some nursery catalogue was introducing it as a novelty. [laughter] But the otaksa varieties, the garden varieties don't force too well for pot culture. That's when the shorter, more compact varieties came. And those were introduced I think from--they were either English, or hybrids introduced by one of the Eastern nurseries.

Riess: What is your impression of why these popularities come and go? What's the driving force behind it?

Domoto: I think it's economic, economics.

Riess: For instance, bay trees?

Domoto: That was one formal period where nothing was being grown. Most of those were being imported, and very few being grown here. And then after that the landscapers were using veronicas, different kinds of veronicas, and cotoneasters and pyracantha. And eugenia. That's one period. Almost every nursery, those were the main plants that were being sold, outside of conifers. And conifer-wise, it would be--oh, Italian cypress along about that time became very popular.

But before the Italian cypress, the trees--. That's connected with a lot of the tall growing things that are more or less part of the planting for streets. Like we had the *Dracaena* palm. And then we had a period when the Phoenix palm was used. But that got too big and too wide for sidewalk planting, so they used to be planted in the middle of a lawn. The old homes in parts of East Oakland and parts of Alameda used to have the big Phoenix palms there, very tall, and the trunks got big.

That was the era of the palms, and then palms went into shade trees, and then shade trees--I think there was sycamore, poplar, and some acacia.

Riess: In what way was that driven by the economy?

Domoto: Well, streets got wider, and people had to have sidewalks, and you would walk down there, the tree would get in the way. So you'd want a smaller trees that would get tall.

Riess: I live in a part of Berkeley where there's a lot of the cinnamon camphor, the Chinese camphor tree.

Domoto: Yes, that was a period when they were planting camphor trees.

Riess: And all the sidewalks are bulging with roots.

Domoto: Yes. There was a time when camphor trees were very popular, and then because of the way it was growing, the ginkgos came in, and parts of San Jose, you see just all ginkgos. And then after that the flowering trees came in, like the hawthornes, and crabapples and peaches and plums, those flowering trees came in.

Riess: For street trees?

Domoto: Street or yard trees, even.

Riess: I guess you know that eugenia has suffered a major setback now, with the psyllid. After all the years of eugenia hedges.

Domoto: Yes, and they used to have scale, but for some reason they were able to control the scale, with spray or other predators. But there are several varieties of eugenia, too.

Riess: It just shows how dependent people have become on that plant, when you see how many devastated hedges there are.

Domoto: I think there again, you see, they wanted something to grow fast that they can produce at an economic price. That's why, you see, it depends on the economy. And then the yards were getting

smaller. They didn't have room for big trees, and people didn't want to wait until the trees would get big. They were in a hurry. They're getting more and more so now.

That's why these tree farms like the ones they have--two or three in Sunol, and in southern California--they grow trees just for street tree planting, so they're large trees, or for immediate subdivisions. That era started in southern California, Del Amo, I guess he was Spanish descent, one of the big subdividers down there. He couldn't find trees for his planting at the nursery in quantity for his planting, so he started a subsidiary on Del Amo land called the Del Amo Nurseries. They grew plants mainly for their own subdivisions. The surplus they had they would sell to other nurseries.

So the whole economy has changed. Like conifers, the style will change. There are very few Italian cypress being planted. Once in a while I see some of the gardens where they want something tall.

More on Azaleas

Riess: Back to these Kurumes, your father had the exclusive sales rights between 1917 and 1921.

Domoto: We had the rights, but we were never able to make use of them, except to bring a few in for variety that we needed for propagating.

Riess: But 10,000 were sold? That sounds like a lot.

Domoto: Well, if you divide that in two, half went to Cottage Gardens, and that went East, and they in turn would either divide it two or three ways back there. And then they started to propagate--. I think over there it ended up by just one of the nurseries propagating. Out here we depended on Cottage Gardens to produce the plants. But the Kurume were slow-growing, and their popularity at that time was--. While they were pretty-looking, they wanted more of the showy Indica ones. They call it the Christmas azalea, the potted azalea, the forced variety, with a nice brilliant shiny foliage and deep red flowers, so it was a good Christmas plant.

Then we had the weaker growing Vervaeana, the larger-flowered, double. They were white and pink and variegated. Those were the main forced azaleas we used to have. Gardenwise the only one we

had out here was the one they call Hinodegiri--garden azalea. And then about the time the azalea craze came in, there was one called Hino-crimson. Hinodegiri is sort of a lavender-red, and made a splash in the garden, but it's a hard color to use. And now, I guess the Hino-crimson has taken over and is still in demand.

Riess: Some gardens are really splendid azalea displays in springtime, but the colors are wild.

Domoto: Well, if they're dirty magenta--not magenta, it's a dirty pink, neither rose nor pink nor white--in a mass it's all right, by itself, but it never fits in with anything else.

Over in Lake Merritt Park they used to have a big bed--I don't know if they have it there or not--and in Berkeley, too, and in Piedmont, the old gardens, they have Hinodegiri. And that blooms I think a little earlier than the Hino-crimson. The Hino-crimson is much later.

Tom Domoto's 1917 Trip to Japan

Riess: When your father went back to Japan in 1917 to make this purchase, I have read that he was also dealing in junk steel.

Domoto: That was incidental, because my uncle was importing-exporting. My father mainly took plants, because he hadn't been there--I guess that was the first time he went since he came, since he brought my mother from Japan, his first trip back to Japan.

Riess: Do you remember your father's departure, the excitement about that?

Domoto: Departure in steamers in those days was quite an event. Everybody would go down to the pier to see them off, and throw serpentines, and they would keep on tying the serpentines to see how long--. They were in rolls, and if you threw it right, you would hold one end of it, one long streamer, and then it comes out, and just before the ship would start sailing, let it down off of the side of the deck, and then grab it, and as they move away from the wharf, at about the end you'd tie another one on, and try to keep that going as long as possible.

And, of course, the steamers, they had to be backed away from the pier. They had to go out into the Bay, and then head towards the Golden Gate with the tugs, so it would take a little time. And then they had an orchestra playing. It was quite colorful.

Riess: The whole family came?

Domoto: Oh, not necessarily everyone, but whoever could--friends--would go out and see them off.

Riess: Could you go on board before?

Domoto: Oh, yes, certain ones that had permits to visit there, especially if they were first or second class.

Riess: How did your father travel? First or second class?

Domoto: When they were going that time I think they went either second or first. Third-class steerage, you were below deck all the time, whereas the first class would be above-deck.

Riess: Did you say "they?" Who went? Your father and his brother?

Domoto: My father and his brother, the two of them.

Riess: How long were they gone on that trip?

Domoto: It must have been at least maybe a year and a half or two years.

Riess: Really? And who was responsible at this end, then?

Domoto: Oh, as far as the nursery part went we had different foremen and superintendents.

Riess: I see. Why was he gone so long?

Domoto: Well, the wartime, and they were busy otherwise. And travel in those days, it was at least one month traveling, so even if you go there and back it's two months out of the year. That's ten months left. If you wait for one season to get the plants together, and then the wartime, it's not easy to travel. I think he was gone--I know through one season.

Riess: Did the plants come back with him on that crossing?

Domoto: No.

Riess: It would be a different kind of a boat?

Domoto: Oh, there might be some on the same boat, but most of them, after they were purchased, they had to be boxed, crated, and put on board. That first purchase that came in, he had to check on it to make sure that the people that were boxing them were doing it properly. Some of the plants we used to get, especially I

remember on peonies, the ones we were getting from one grower, they were pratty true to name. But some of the others were way off.

Typhoid Fever and Other Illnesses

Riess: I remember noticing in your photo album, and asking you about it, a picture of your father in a full beard. You said that was because you had typhoid fever?

Domoto: Oh, that was--I didn't know exactly why he did it, most of the time he just had a mustache--but I had gotten typhoid fever.

Riess: When?

Domoto: I think in about 1916.

Riess: From what?

Domoto: The nearest thing that I could connect with it was in those days when they used to get these big blocks of ice from the lakes for the cut flower storage, for the San Francisco Flower Market. My dad had a store over there in San Francisco, and I was over there visiting, and the iceman was just putting the big blocks of ice in the compartment above the place where they stored the flowers. I guess I picked up some shavings, pieces, and stuck them in my mouth--and just enjoyed the ice.

I think that's the only place we could figure out where I could get the typhoid fever. The ice had come in from lakes somewhere, frozen, and not artificially made. The ice that was sold to the restaurants, that was all artificially frozen. But these big blocks for the butcher shops and the flower shops--they had a big cold storage area, they were the ones that had come in from the storage area--they were the ones that were cut out from the lakes or wherever they were frozen.

In those days they didn't know too much about typhoid, and everybody said you can't go near typhoid because you're likely to catch it too, so they were all afraid. It was just lucky that the man that was a chrysanthemum grower for my dad from Japan, Mr. Suto, he had nursed his son through typhoid fever and he offered to take care of me. I guess at the time, why, they thought that was the end, and that's why my father grew the beard. [foregoing said with deep emotion by Mr. Domoto]

I must have been sick at least nine months, or maybe longer.

Riess: Do you remember that?

Domoto: I remember part. I don't remember being sick, but I remember I got to be all skin and bones and wasn't able to walk, even. I had to be taught how to walk, even, in the beginning. Those are the kind of things I remember.

Riess: Where did you sleep?

Domoto: In the family home. They wouldn't take me to a hospital. They put me in one room and kept my sisters away. They couldn't come in until after the danger of contagion was over.

Riess: Such a long recovery.

Domoto: In those days, no antibiotics or anything. Just a matter of care. High fever. And having to be taught to walk. I thought I could walk right away, but I had to be taught.

Riess: Could you read?

Domoto: I just lay in bed for a long time, I don't know how long it was.

Riess: And your father's beard?

Domoto: I found out afterwards, he said, "I'll leave it growing until he gets well. Then I'll shave it."

Riess: What a celebration they must have had when you were well!

Domoto: They had a party when I got well enough to walk around again.

Riess: That's one of your nine lives.

Domoto: Yeah, that and a busted appendix. I've had pretty near everything. [laughs]

Riess: That was a real emergency. Were you young?

Domoto: I think that must have been 1917. I had a busted appendix, and I went to the hospital, and I was in a hospital I guess almost a month.

Riess: What else don't I know about?

Domoto: Double hernia.

Riess: When was that?

Domoto: Around the nursery, when we importing these stone lanterns from Japan.

And I think I had pretty nearly every kid disease that came around from school. The epidemics would go through, and I'd bring it home--I'd get it first, and then the rest of the family would get it.

Riess: Your poor mother. And then your sisters would bring home diseases?

Domoto: Very little. I don't think so. Most of them had already had it by the time they got it through me. We had mumps, and scarlet fever.

Riess: What a responsibility you had!

Domoto: I guess I was a carrier, huh?

And then there was a period where we had the colds where you used to get earache and they'd have to puncture the ear. I got so I used to help the doctor hold the ear, and I could almost pierce the ear for him.

Riess: Did that damage your hearing?

Domoto: No, it hasn't so far! I think my hearing is better than my eyesight.

Riess: I can really sympathize with your mother.

Domoto: And trying to treat them [children] all equal, you know.

She never said anything, like she'd like to go back to Japan to visit her folks. But after one of her very close relatives, an aunt I think, died, she was kind of sad. She said, "Well, I don't have to go back. There aren't any more."

Riess: She made a very remarkable family. She must have been remarkable.

Domoto: Not only our family, but for other families, close friends, the wives used to come to her with a sob story, you know. They talked, and she tried to comfort them.

Riess: I'm glad I asked about all that. I know it is hard for you to think back to that time.

Domoto: Little things like that, it's back here [gesturing to back of the head], and you ask them, and it comes out.

VII ANTI-ALIENISM

Incorporation

[Interview 3: August 5, 1992] ##

Riess: How did you, personally, feel at the time of the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924?

Domoto: Feeling wasn't toward Japan so much then, it was more against the Asian immigrants. That was most of the anti-thing there, as far as my part is concerned. The thing that concerned us, as far as agriculture, was the land law, because it dealt with the land ownership. The anti-Alien Land Law was a California thing; it wasn't national.¹

The main feature of that was that Japanese, Asians, could buy a home or rent an apartment, buy a home in the residential districts, but as far as agricultural land--. They were able to buy before that, but when the law went in, it was written so that if the family had purchased land before the Alien Land Law, at the time the husband passed away the state would escheat the property

¹"...the crusade against the Japanese mounted in intensity. ... The first major salvo of the campaign was the Alien Land Law, the Webb Act of 1913. The burden of this measure was that aliens who were not eligible to citizenship would not be permitted to acquire farmland or to lease parcels of agricultural land for more than three years. Ostensibly it applied to all Orientals and to other aliens who could not or would not seek United States citizenship; practically its application was to the Japanese alone. ... It developed...that there were many ways to escape its full rigors, through indirect leasing, through the device of incorporation, and through vesting ownership in California Japanese who had already acquired citizenship." John W. Caughey, California, Prentice-Hall, 1961, pp. 470-471.

and sell it, and the proceeds would go to the widow or heirs. But the widow would not be able to get title to the property, even though it was purchased before the land law.

I think there was a chapter where a corporation, provided, I forget, 50 percent of the shareholders are American or something, a corporation could buy land. They could give the shares to the heirs or whoever they wanted, but they couldn't escheat the land. That was the main part of the thing.

Riess: They couldn't what the land?

Domoto: Escheat. That's the term they used--actually, almost like confiscating the property. Escheat sounds better.

Riess: Did many corporations form then?

Domoto: Oh, yes.

Riess: And would they have Asian members of the corporation?

Domoto: Well, most of the corporations that were formed earlier--they were at different stages--the earlier ones were to protect land that they already owned, or were in the process of buying.

Riess: What did your father do specifically?

Domoto: We had to form a corporation.

Riess: That's when it became Domoto Brothers, Incorporated?

Domoto: Yes. It was Domoto Brothers before that, long before that. But it wasn't incorporated until 1913, whenever the anti-Alien Land Law came in as law. That's when pretty near all the greenhouses and nurseries around went into incorporation.

Names

Riess: When did you begin to feel prejudice?

Domoto: Certain kinds--well, you know, the first feeling you get really when you start going to grammar school. The term they used to have for a Japanese was "skippy yellow-bellied Jap, skippy yellow-bellied Jap," and I guess those were the--. The youngsters, they would call you that.

The older ones, even their surnames, nicknames-- . At that time, my father's and brother's were more common: Frank, my uncle; Tom, my father; Henry, Harry, and Joe. And for a long time, "Charlie" and "John" used to be names that they used to call the Chinese. Now by the second- and third-generation Japanese youngsters, they have John and Charlie first names already. But at one time, I remember when they called an Oriental, "Hey, Charlie," or, "Hey, John," he was Chinese.

And the other names were more or less given to the first-generation Japanese, unless they had already taken a Christian name. It's hard for people to remember Japanese names, so they got so where, "Oh, we'll call you Frank or Tom." Eventually, even the legal papers, some of them, like my father's papers, it was Thomas Kanetaro Domoto. In other words, the Japanese name preceded by the Christian first name.

Some of the second generation, what they used to do was get their Japanese name first, and the middle name. Or you'll see it vice versa, the middle name would be the Christian name. If they're baptized in the Christian church, then you get the English name, so the Japanese name would be the middle name. But then the youngsters, instead of using the Japanese name, they just use the Christian name.

Riess: When you were called names, was it hostile, or was it just kind of name-calling?

Domoto: Youngsters, like when you're going to school, after a while you get used to it.

I can remember, I was never very athletic, but the grammar school would have an inter-school baseball team. I used to go along with them, help, maybe mascot or whatever it was, when we played one of the other grammar schools. I used to go to Lockwood School, and Highland Grammar School, they were around 84th Avenue and East 14th Street in Oakland, when we played the games they used to come and play, and they started calling me, "Hey, yellow-belly," and one of my classmates got up and started a fight. He said, "You don't call my friend that."

As far as where I was concerned, it was different. You got to know them. That's the way it goes. Like even later, when the [Nurserymen's] Association--the older generation in the business and that--"Well, he's different." You are singled out, not as a group, but as a single person. Sometimes you kind of have a feeling of resentment, not necessarily a feeling that you're poorer, but just resentment. And then you just learn to accept it and make the best of it. I always felt that way.

Later in the business life, the nursery--I don't know about all of the others, but in the early days of flower shows, the Japanese growers, especially in the fall season, chrysanthemum season, they weren't allowed to compete in the show because they used to grow too good a flower. They'd get all the blue ribbons. But that didn't stop the exhibitors from buying the flowers from the Japanese growers and exhibiting them as their own grown!

Riess: How long was that going on?

Domoto: Oh, that probably ended--I don't know just when, but that was during the early days of the society. Then later they got so that they used to let them come in. I've forgotten the name of the society. Maybe Pacific Coast Horticultural Society. That was in my father's time. But I was old enough to know what was happening.

Education at Stanford

Riess: Did you get very good grades in school?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Straight A's?

Domoto: Well, not all straight A's, but it was good grades.

Riess: How did you decide about Stanford? Why Stanford?

Domoto: I could have gone to Cal or Stanford, I applied to both Stanford and Cal, but at that time Cal did not have a good horticultural type of education. Although I still then had no intention of going into the nursery business, I wanted to be something on the mechanical engineering side.

Riess: So you weren't looking really for a horticultural education.

Domoto: No. I wasn't, no.

Riess: Was it your father who was telling you that there was no future in that profession?

Domoto: No. It was left to us. But see, we had a tutor in Japanese who was a premedical student in Stanford, and that [must have been an influence]. And I didn't know until much later that my high school advisor was a Stanford graduate. So when it came to

putting in my application for entry, I had applications to Cal and Stanford, but I went to Stanford.

I guess that was the period when Stanford first started their general education [course]. Whatever you call it. For the first two years you didn't go into your regular college to study. You would have a general citizenship course. The only ones who were taking electives were the engineers and those who were going into chemistry. They would have the electives that would go towards the degree in those two departments. But all the others, econ or history, all that, you just took a general course. That was the beginning of the idea that to be a success you had to have more knowledge than just a knowledge in one part.

Testing the Stanford-Binet Test

Domoto: In fact, that was the period when I think I told--. We had the Stanford-Binet test, did you hear about that? We were the beginning, one of the beginning groups.

Riess: You mean they tested the Stanford-Binet test on you?

Domoto: On us, yes. Also, along about that same time, since we used to have the group of children from the Japanese nurseries around my father's place, and we had a teacher teaching them Japanese, they came and gave them all a test. The first test that they gave was individually. They found that there were a lot of things in the tests that we had no knowledge of, because of the different cultural upbringing. So they gave a different set of tests, or deleted part of it and tested those.

Riess: And they thought that was valid?

Domoto: I don't know, but listening to the TV once in a while now--

Riess: It's still an issue.

Domoto: Yes, it's an issue. But I know at that time, when they first started the tests, there was a difference. I know they came and wanted permission to--I think there were about ten or twelve, maybe more, youngsters there that took this group of tests. We took the tests even in high school, not individually but as a class, a group, the Binet test they were testing out. And some of our tests must have gone on into the test there, and for further study. I never knew whether they did it or not, but from what I understand, they may have followed up certain students.

Asian Students at Stanford

- Riess: Did you have a scholarship, or did you have scholarships offered to you?
- Domoto: No. Those days, there wasn't much in the way of scholarships. We had to either work our way through or--in fact, the tutor we had for Japanese, he was working his way through.
- Riess: Was that a problem for your family, to put you through Stanford?
- Domoto: Oh, in those days--. Well, yes, actually, it wasn't like it is now, but I entered the year that they raised their tuition from \$60 a quarter to \$96. I didn't know about it. I went there and registered in the regular fall session, but I entered a class there with most of the students who had already been there through the summer session. Those that entered in the summer session were able to maintain the \$60 tuition until they graduated. Whereas, I had to pay my \$96. They didn't tell me anything about that, because I just went down and registered.
- Riess: Were there students from the East Coast at Stanford in those days, or was it more of a California school?
- Domoto: I don't know where they were from. Mostly Californians, I guess.
- Riess: And were there other Japanese? Surely there were.
- Domoto: Yes. We were limited I think--. [Quota?] We had a Japanese Club there, and there was a Chinese Club, living quarters.
- Riess: Was that where you lived?
- Domoto: Yes. We had a clubhouse, and the Chinese had a clubhouse, just like the fraternities. Their houses were in Fraternity Row, so-called.
- Riess: Did this give you a sense of yourself as part of a Japanese elite?
- Domoto: No. Just figured, well, taking my lessons.
- Riess: [laughs] What do you mean?
- Domoto: Took them in stride. Without making any issue of it. Although they used to--.

I never felt just because I was there I was any better. But just to show you, during the summer vacation period some of the

fellow [Japanese] students, they said they would be working out in the fields to earn money for tuition--their summer work was mostly agricultural work. They would go out to groups there.

Nonstudents, [fellow field workers], Japanese, they'd want to either buy or trade or whichever, the Stanford or California buckle, so they could wear it. They'd go parading around with it, and nobody would ask them if they were going there or not, but they assumed if they were wearing the belt, why, they were a Stanford or Cal man!

Riess: The buckle was a traditional thing to buy when you were a freshman?

Domoto: Well, you didn't have to buy it, but most everybody else were wearing them. Of course, the freshmen designation was the beanies.

Transferring to the University of Illinois

Riess: You told me the first time we talked that you wanted to do the mechanical engineering, but you were pretty much discouraged from pursuing that because the job opportunities you knew were slim.

Domoto: Yes. Of the ones [Japanese] that graduated before, or that we heard of that had got degrees here at Cal or Stanford, they had a hard time getting any jobs in their line.

Riess: What made you change? Was it the conversation with Frank Oechslein? [Frank Oechslein, a German grower in Chicago, was in California and visited Domoto Nursery where he and Toichi had a conversation.]

Domoto: I guess that was just one of the turning points. More than that was the fact that if I was going to go into horticulture or whatever, I should spend my time getting more knowledge in a school where they would offer that kind of courses. But I didn't know about it until talking with Oechslein. He said, "Well, if it's floriculture--" at that time it was either Cornell or Illinois, and on the cut flower side, pot plants, Illinois would be better. "If you're a general horticulture major, I think Bailey at Cornell."

Riess: Oh, the famous Liberty Hyde Bailey.

Domoto: Yes. If I was going more into horticulture, he suggested going to Cornell.

Riess: Why didn't you go to Cornell?

Domoto: I went back to Stanford in the fall quarter for registering, and then found out that there was nothing in the classes there that interested me. Then I remembered the conversation I had in the summer with Oechsli, when I was talking to him. At Cornell they had already started. But the registrar at Stanford contacted the registrar at Illinois and he said, "Come right away." That week, or the first part of the week, I could get in; I could still register for that year.

Riess: They really were helpful at Stanford.

Domoto: Oh, sure, that way they were. And it just happened that the registrar and the department head over at Illinois said, "If you come right away, you'll be in time for the mid-quarter exams. But we'll give you time to prepare that exam." So I packed up and went to Illinois.

Riess: That was the first time you had really been away from home. Was it a big trauma at this end?

Domoto: Oh, sure. Home life and first time away experience. Like now, you go back and forth in a matter of five or six hours, or maybe ten hours of traveling time. Those days, you'd leave here, and in about three days or forty-eight hours--I think forty-eight or fifty-one hours--go to Chicago, and then another half a day down to Urbana.

And then you couldn't telephone; you could, but long distance telephones weren't in operation. So it was a kind of trying time.

Riess: And you were more isolated, I suppose, from other Japanese?

##

Riess: The other Japanese, you say, were mostly from Japan?

Domoto: Yes, graduate students.

Riess: And planning to go back to Japan?

Domoto: Yes. Or else they were sent by scholarship, or paid by some company back in Japan.

Riess: What did you do for a place to live?

Domoto: After I got there they had to find people with rooms to rent or where I could go. So after they gave me the names, address, I'd go there, and find a room in one of the professor's homes.

The floriculture group was a very small group, so the professor there was very helpful in getting me oriented. The home was more or less a bedroom, and I had another place for boarding, I had to go there for the meals.

Riess: You were long since used to American food, I guess, or was it strange to have to eat at a boarding house table?

Domoto: No, food was no bother to me. Except on the West Coast we're spoiled being able to eat a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables. The first place I used to go to for my meals, they were farm folks, so it was a good hearty meal, but very plain, Western, like cornmeal mush or whatever, in the morning, toast, eggs, and pork chops.

Riess: [laughs] Like you're going out to work.

Domoto: Yes, regular farm menu. And lunch used to be-- I missed my vegetables more than anything else. In California, we're spoiled that way. Of course, at the folks' place, they used to have a vegetable garden around. And even fish, I never liked fish, but when you don't have it, you miss it.

Floriculture Course

Riess: Was there a famous professor at Illinois? Like Liberty Hyde Bailey at Cornell.

Domoto: It was a very small department, and the man that headed that was [Herman] Dohner. Dohner was the head of the department, and Dr. Weinard was the pathology, entomology professor. Stanley Hall was in charge of the greenhouse, the practical side of the horticulture.

Riess: How can you still remember these names?

Domoto: I don't know. They're just there.

Hall was a World War I--I think he must have been a lieutenant or something in the army, ex-army, but he never said too much about it. Once in a while he'd talk about how he hated war. But he never got into it much. But those three, and it

being a small group--at that time I think there were five or six students in floriculture in my class, so it was a very informal group. We had some women that were in it, studying for landscape.

Riess: Did they have a landscape degree there?

Domoto: Oh, yes.

Riess: That was a separate degree, but the women took the floriculture classes?

Domoto: Yes. And some of the classes, like gardening, planting a garden, they figured that landscape people should know that, and the same with the ones in horticulture. So they had the classes together. But that didn't work out too good, because the landscape people--there were too many of them there.

Whereas those of us in floriculture either came from floricultural families, or those that had really wanted to go into that kind of work, in a small group, so we were more intense in our desire. The others were in there because landscaping was one of the easy courses, like in L&S [Letters & Science], so they would be in there.

Then they decided to separate, so except for lecture courses in plant design or something like that, we were separated. I was lucky in having a small group as our group to work with. So we almost had like a personal tutor.

Riess: When you talk about floricultural families, are you talking about members of families with names like Burpee?

Domoto: Most of them there were mostly in the wholesale cut flower growing or pot plant group, or related.

Riess: Have you kept in business contact with your classmates there?

Domoto: No, mostly not. Of the group that graduated with me, I think one went to teach at Texas A&M. Another one came out to southern California, and he went into wholesale cut-flower shipping. And then another one, he graduated highest honors in the whole college at that time, he went into I think commercial law. He was a straight-A student all the way through college. Very sociable fellow. They had friends that were in the florist business, and

so he thought he'd like it. But after he finished--I think he was getting ready to graduate, I think it was about the second year--he went into the law, changed.

Riess: You lost track of these people? I'm thinking of when life got hard during the Second World War, did any of these people reach out to you and make contact?

Domoto: As far as my classmates, they were all scattered in different places.

Schramm's Nursery. and Feeling Alien

Domoto: But for my job relation during the war in Illinois, Professor Dohner and the staff there helped me staying with the family I worked with. Dohner, his father had a family flower-growing business in Illinois. His family, or rather he, was the one that made, that crossed one of the first named carnations at that time, called Laddie. It was a carnation with a strong neck, not too many flowers, a good pink. Anyway, he knew this family in Illinois that was in cut flowers.

Riess: That's the Schramms?

Domoto: Schramm, yes.

Riess: Professor Dohner made the contact with you, or you had to write and ask him for that?

Domoto: They started looking around for someone, the Schramms, they wanted somebody who knew about camellias. I had been in contact with Dohner. He thought of me right away, and he knew the conditions. So then they found out that if someone vouched for you, you could leave camp and go to work. So they in turn talked to the Schramms, and then they wrote a letter to me.

But at that time the few that went out from camp to work, they weren't received too well. So I thought, "Well, what do I get by going out there? Nothing, so I might as well stay with the family." Later I got another call, from a man who was secretary of the American Association of Nurserymen, who worked for the D. Hill Nursery. I got to know him through a convention meeting in California with the California [Association of Nurserymen]. He wrote me a letter and said, "I'll verify that you'll get good treatment with the Schramms."

I thought, "Well, I can't lose anything. I'll go out for a couple of weeks or three weeks, and if I don't like it, I can go back." That's how I happened to go.

The man that was in charge, that was running the Schramm greenhouses, was Mr. Arens. When I went there they met me, and instead of trying to find a place to stay, I stayed right in their house with them, lived with them as one of the family. I was fortunate in that case, because they were about my age, and they had been through War I, when those of German descent were in the same position that we were, only not quite as--not concentration camps, but they were--you know, "the Huns" and that. They understood.

Riess: Did they talk to you about that?

Domoto: No.

Riess: Or you just are understanding that.

Domoto: Later some things come up, and they kind of mentioned that they knew what kind of feeling--they never expressed too much, and I didn't either. I wasn't bitter or anything. I might have felt bitter, but I never expressed myself that way, about being treated as an alien. Because more or less, I was used to it.

Riess: You say you're more or less used to it?

Domoto: Yes. You get hardened to it. You're not happy with it probably, but when you get hardened as a youngster, you get used to little things. Like water off of a duck's back, it just rolls off and you don't let it bother you. If it bothers you too much, then it's bad.

I found out later that I was never the type, or physically able to fight with anyone. You know, when you tease somebody, unless you get a reaction there's no fun doing it. So it stops. Whereas, a very good friend of mine, he was about my age, and he was very wiry, but he was very aggressive, and the minute they wanted to have some fun, and started to call him names, right away he wanted to fight. So, "Take off your coat." I used to have to hold his coat for him. [laughter]

But in all my life, I've never had a really good fight with anybody. Only once, when I was doing something in grammar school and I happened to pull my hand back or something, and I happened to hit someone, just accidentally hit him. [Another guy] said, "Leave that guy alone. He knows jujitsu." [laughs] I didn't

know a darn thing about jujitsu, but-- [laughs] Things like that.

Riess: That's a good reputation to get!

Getting Nursery Business Experience

Riess: I was interested to look at the nursery trade catalogue that you loaned to me and to think about what goes into putting together a nursery business now. When you were in school were you learning all the practical stuff about how to start a nursery?

Domoto: Oh, that was part of the courses, but they didn't have all the things that they have now. You were supposed to be able to start growing things, or else knowing about greenhouse construction.

Out here in California, a lot of the houses were built by a family or somebody that knew, because they're wooden houses. But in Illinois the weather conditions are a lot tougher, and they had to be better built, and they cost more, and very few growers built their own greenhouses. They had construction firms that did that kind of work, like back East in New York it was Lord & Bernham. They even had a branch in Mt. Eden here for California building after the war.

Riess: What about the business end? Did you learn business skills for running a nursery?

Domoto: In college you don't get much, except at Christmas holidays. Christmas is a long holiday, and most of the florists would employ us to go and work during the holiday week. Those that were lucky enough, we used to go to work in a retail flower shop [on State Street], which I did in Chicago. The others, one of my classmates went to work at Garfield Park in Chicago--that's one of the older public parks, conservatories--during the vacation. After he graduated, he kept his job there, and I think later, he was in charge of the greenhouses.

Riess: That's how you got your hands-on experience.

Domoto: Well, as far as my part, it was in preparing and caring for camellias for the retail market there, for wholesale market.

Riess: In Chicago?

Domoto: In Chicago. And growing under their greenhouse conditions. They were in gardenias, so I was able to help them sizing right at the beginning. Like grading the flowers, I could grade pretty fast. So I got so I was more or less in charge of the packing room, did the packing.

Riess: You didn't go home for that whole period of time when you were in Illinois?

Domoto: There was no home there. I couldn't go back home. My home was here [Hayward]. And soon after I got there, I guess it was less than a month after I left, then they were trying to get the people out of the camps, so they were paying them to go out of camp.

Riess: Excuse me. I mean when you were a student at Champaign-Urbana, did you come home during the summers?

Domoto: The summertime I did, yes.

Riess: That's what I meant. I didn't mean during the camp time.

Domoto: No. That would only be two summers I came back home. The rest of the time, Christmastime, I just was working. And the last time, I came back home.

New Growing Methods

Riess: Yes. And when you came home, then, you were put right to work?

Domoto: Oh, yes. I worked in my father's place.

Riess: Were you able to incorporate new techniques and learning about fumigants and things when you came home?

Domoto: Not that as such. But I'd help the boys do something, and, "Oh, university man, he knows how to do it." You know, slurs. "Oh, he knows how to do it, because he's a university graduate."

Riess: They probably were just dying to have you make a mistake.

Domoto: Yes. Well, even if I did make a mistake, unless it was real bad they wouldn't say anything about it. I more or less got used to that before, because when the workers wanted to buy buckles, you know, you kind of learned what's happening, and since my father employed quite a few students from Japan, I got to know the quality of work some of them did, and some of them didn't. Some

were students--they probably got the family to send them there so that they wouldn't have to get into the draft in Japan--military training, not draft, military training.

Some were pretty good growers. I learned several things from them. But as far as horticulture, only one man, and he was from a small agricultural college that started in northern Japan, my father said he was the first one he ever got from a Japanese agricultural school that was worth anything. The others used to make fun of him, just like the early days, anyone who had graduated from Davis, he wasn't the same as a UC graduate. Davis was part of the UC, but at that time it was considered an "ag school." And so when you graduated you were a degree under, in the grade standard.

Riess: But was it really true that the material they were learning [at Davis] was not as valuable?

Domoto: I would say some things they were ahead, but most of them were for the conditions there [Illinois] that I learned. But then as far as other parts, certain parts, the mechanical and other features, it was good. So when the nurseries around here in California got larger or modernized, a lot of the things they followed were things that they were doing back East. Out here the foremost greenhouse teaching was at Cal Poly.

The competition between California-grown flowers and greenhouse-grown flowers in the Middle West, especially in chrysanthemums, was pretty pronounced, and the California growers were getting the top price, because we would be able to get them in earlier than the Middle West. They had experiments [at Ohio State] to shorten the days. They were starting to use black cloth, or satin cloth, over the cheesecloth. That experiment was made, and some of the more advanced growers here took that up right away. I was still in college at the time, and you'd hear. "Those damn Japs out there, we made an experiment, and they do it before we do." It was done for them, but they didn't get into doing that; they got so they could produce early, but out here, they're producing earlier.

Riess: That sounds also like a familiar attitude of Americans.

Domoto: Right now your auto industry--that's an example of this, more than anything else. And not just Japan, but Germany too. The same. Some country gets far ahead, and for a long time--even now, I think--some of them think, "Oh, there's nothing like English horticulture." Well, they're living on their laurels, not only in agriculture or horticulture, but as far as the historical prominence of England as such.

After War I, and War II, they [the British] were already decayed, as far as history. You had the Roman Empire, and then the others going on, Teutonic era. At one time England was--"The Union Jack flies over the world," or something like that. And right now, we're in that position. The U.S. is the--not only financial, but militarily, we're the number one country so far.

Riess: I'd say militarily more than financially!

Domoto: Oh, financially, ten, fifteen years ago, we were still the giant in finance, too. But times have changed.

Riess: The next number one is going to be what?

Domoto: I don't know. I remember my history class at Stanford, and the professor was an ex-army man, teaching modern history. I think his name was Professor Lutz. He said, "Modern civilization has traveled from Asia through Europe, and then finally to U.S. And it's traveling westward now." At that time, the United States was just coming into being on an equal with England, because England still had all those big colonies.

"After it hits the United States," he said, he would hesitate to know which way the civilization would go, whether it would go back to the East or Southeast [Asia] or down into South America. Civilization is going that way, and it's hard to tell which way it was going to go at that time.

"Passport" to Home, Spring 1926 ##

Riess: What was the degree you received from Illinois?

Domoto: I think that it was a bachelor's degree, and I think they had a horticulture [department], so it would be in horticulture.

Riess: Did your parents come back to see you graduate?

Domoto: I didn't even go back there. I finished in mid-term, because I had to transfer in the fall--I had three courses that I had to finish in order to get my degree, so I finished in February, or January. Then I made a trip. I knew it would be the last trip I would take that way, so I took the train to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., New York, went to Niagara Falls, and I went to the Statue of Liberty.

At that time, it being winter, there were very few visitors to the island, so I was able to go up into the statue way up. There was a point where they had an observation platform, and most of the visitors would only go that far. From there up, there's another series of ladders that go up into the torch, and I was the only one on. The fellow said, "I'll stay here, you can go up, but don't take too long." I was able to go up into the torch.

Riess: Did you have a camera with you on that trip?

Domoto: Yes. I took some pictures then. At Niagara Falls, that was the year that it was really cold, and almost frozen over. So I didn't take pictures there.

And then into Canada, and the train, when it came back to the States, it came back and the conductor said, "Where is your passport?" He thought I was supposed to have, but I didn't need one, being a citizen, see. But because I was Oriental, they started checking. I said, "No, I'm just on the way home from college." Then he asked me other questions, finally said, "Okay, come on back."

Riess: Those must be strange moments. You feel at home, and then suddenly someone makes you feel not at home any more.

Domoto: Yes. But after a while you get to the point where you're questioned about a lot of things because they're not sure. I'd accept it and not be resentful, except when they woke me up at night in my berth. [laughs] Then you get kind of mad, start telling them--. Sometimes you get kind of exasperated, because the people that are questioning are so dumb.

Riess: You said when you were woken up at night?

Domoto: Yes. On the transcontinental train, at the time that you're asleep, and it so happened that was the period where the train would come back from the Canadian side into the U.S., and the border, immigration group, you know--.

Riess: They would sort of rattle you out of bed, and say, "Who are you?"

Domoto: Yes.

Acacias in Bloom

Riess: On that trip what else did you do?

Domoto: I went to Cornell, visited there, mostly on the horticulture side. I wanted to see what my other college would have been. [laughs] I saw my first ice hockey game there.

Riess: Did you have any family members on the East Coast?

Domoto: No, all our families are out here. My cousin's family, they were all most of them--during that period, I guess they were in Japan, except the older cousin, he was in--this is War II, he was already in Denver. I think the rest of his family were in Japan.

Riess: On that trip were you seeing the world through the eyes of a nurseryman? Do you get excited when you see different plants and trees?

Domoto: Oh, yes. Different things. Like going to the New York Botanical Garden. I was impressed with some things, and some things I kind of sniffed at. And now, in a trip back it's mostly by plane, and you don't see much from the airplane. You just go by.

Riess: Were you considering locating anywhere else other than California?

Domoto: Only time that came up was at the time of the evacuation. My brother took a trip to the southern states where camellias were being grown in quantity, seeing if there was any place where we might relocate to. But he didn't find much of anything, and then I came back here and started going on from where I left off here.

I don't know how train travel is now with Amtrak, but in those days, a trip from here to the Middle West or East, the Plains area is the most monotonous part of the ride. But the rest of it is quite interesting. So instead of going back the same train every trip, I made use of [the choice].

My first trip over I tried to get there as fast as possible. That was Western Pacific. Then coming back, I came back the Santa Fe. Next trip, Southern Pacific, again to get to Chicago to get back to school, leaving home as late as possible. Then coming back I came back by the Canadian Pacific. You go through the Canadian Rockies, and then down.

The things I remember about California is being asleep at night as you come in on the train. Then in the morning you wake up in the Sierras, and this was the spring, and you see all the acacias in bloom all at one time. I remember the fall colors in the East, but the bloom of the acacias in the spring, coming from the snowy country, sloshing around in the snow, and all of a sudden it's spring and you feel the difference.



A page from Toichi Domoto's University of Illinois memory book. The floriculture students took first place in the homecoming parade. A chrysanthemum-skirted Toichi Domoto was the "baby."



After graduating from the University of Illinois, Toichi Domoto traveled to the East Coast, and north to Niagara Falls, where this photograph was taken, before heading home to California. February 1926.

VIII TOICHI DOMOTO'S NURSERY

Domoto Bros., Inc., Closes

Riess: It seems like a bold move to buy your own land and start a business in 1927.

Domoto: I started making arrangements.

Riess: First did you come back and work with your father?

Domoto: No. I think when I came back I came right back to start around here, because we didn't have a place any more. My father's place was lost.¹

Riess: That's because he was bought out, or what was the story on that?

Domoto: They were incorporated, and they went bankrupt.

Riess: Here's my note on the article. Domoto Bros., Inc. closed "under pressure of urbanization." I was thinking he made a lot of money, because his land had been bought.

Domoto: No, no. Actually, I have no proof of it, but I was told afterwards--. My father was in the process of selling a part of the nursery to get it smaller. The last parcel, the builder that had been building was going to buy the rest of it, had an agreement. Then the Depression period, when they had so many banks closing, it happened that the bank that my father had been dealing with, they had a mortgage on my father's place, and

¹Domoto Bros., Inc. had been under the pressures of urbanization and was forced to sell part of the nursery property. That and the deep depression following the crash of 1929 contributed to the closing of Domoto Bros., Inc. in 1930.

although he already had an agreement with the builder to buy the property, the bank had to foreclose on the property, Father's property, instead of letting him go ahead and sell it to the builder.

And then, what happened, the city had put pressure on the bank, and as soon as they got it, they bought the property for the bankruptcy costs, and made a city park out of it.

Riess: Where did that leave your father?

Domoto: He was broke.

Riess: And his brother too?

Domoto: The other brothers, they were all--we just lost everything.

Riess: Did they have a home to live in?

Domoto: No, they had to move out.

The Depression Era: Good Neighbors

Riess: How did you survive the Depression?

Domoto: I still don't know. I used to go to the flower market, and there were a few gladiolus growers around here that were growing gladiolus for the bulbs, and also they would sell the flowers, and I used to buy the flowers from them and take them over to the San Francisco market and sell them. And I still don't know. Some days my total cash intake, after paying for the flowers, I had less than three dollars to help feed the family.

Riess: You were not married, and you were taking care of your mother and father and your sisters.

Domoto: My mother was gone by then. [Mother died in 1929] But my father, and my sisters.

Riess: Did you have a vegetable garden of your own?

Domoto: Didn't have time for vegetables. We had to do the work on the nursery.

Riess: Yes, but I mean in terms of survival, at least you could grow your food.

Domoto: Well, a few things we used to plant. Mostly, if you're in an agricultural area, if you get to know your neighbors, you swap things. The barter system. In fact, during the Depression I sold plants to customers and they in turn supplied me with their plants. It was a book exchange, merchandise exchange, no cash flow.

Riess: But you did have some people that you could exchange food and goods for plants?

Domoto: Not so much food, but more plants. Most of the grocery things I would try to pay cash, because they would have to pay in cash to their dealers. But the ones like other nurseries or other material--like the lumberyard or something, they would use it [plant material] for somebody else, or some customers of theirs would want some plants and they'd come and get it, and I'd get exchange in lumber.

Riess: Who were your neighbors here? What kind of families? What farm families? Besides Sorensen.

Domoto: Next door was a Portuguese man [Pimental] from the Azores, and they were very friendly.

Riess: What was their business?

Domoto: They had an apricot orchard. He would make a living off of having his orchards, and then doing the pruning for other orchards during the season. He and his wife were able to get enough from the fruit to live during the period.

But the area around here got built up so that there were less and less orchards around. And the cannery from San Jose that used to come up to pick up the fruit, afterwards it didn't pay them to come up to pick up the few tons of fruit that he had here. So then they [cannery in San Jose] quit, and then there was no market for the apricots. So the man here, I think he dried them one year, made dried fruit. But he finally gave that up and sold the property. Don Felson, the builder, bought that property, and built apartments there. I think he was a German Jew.

Riess: Was there any cattle or ranching here?

Domoto: No, not around here. I guess the nearest cattle dairy was down the Mission Road towards probably what is now Niles, and that area there. But around here, no. Most of the farms around here, not too many cattle here, they were mostly orchards or farming like tomatoes or cucumbers.

Riess: You could get truck farm produce from these people?

Domoto: No. Just go to the grocery store and buy it. You could--if it was a small group, it didn't pay to spend the time to go down to the free market.

The only free market used to be in Oakland, only true free market used to be in Oakland, but they were not really farmer's markets in the present-day sense. Present-day free markets or farmer's markets, the producers bring them themselves. But the old free market, they were both a combination of those that brought their own products to sell, and those that bought products to sell. So it was kind of an in-between transition period.

Riess: Free market? Flea market?

Domoto: Flea market is a term that originated in the Depression when they were selling surplus materials, small things. I don't know why--because there would be so many fleas around or what, but that was the name they gave to that.

Family Move to Hayward

Riess: When your father's business closed, and the land was sold, where did they go? Did they come with you then?

Domoto: No. I had arranged to buy a house here in Hayward, and my Uncle Henry went to live with I think his family. He was a widower, his wife had died in the flu epidemic. They rented a home I guess, another home.

Riess: Did this make your father a very bitter man?

Domoto: I think he was just--he didn't express himself, but I know it broke his health. He used to come out--. After a while he used to come to the nursery all the time.

Even at that time, in the Depression, when all the houses around in Hayward here were for sale, I couldn't go out and buy.

Riess: Because you were Asian?

Domoto: Yes. And it happened that I had some friends, and they said, "Well, you go look at these houses. See which one you want, which you can afford." We saw one house there, good-sized house. He said, "What about this one?" Then when they found out who was

going to move in, or something, they refused to sell it. Just around the corner, about a half-block away, was another house, and I was able to buy that. But I wasn't able to buy it in my name.

He said, "Would you trust me to buy it for you?" I said, "Yes, I've got no other choice." So he bought it, and the family was there [825 Alice Street]. And the rest of the business--I had to get started here and move part of the family here, into this house.

Riess: You moved your father's nursery effects?

Domoto: No, the nursery was gone.

Riess: Every capital investment?

Domoto: Every capital value, everything was gone. The only thing we were able to take from the whole place was our clothing and bedding and things that we had, furniture in the house. As far as anything in the nursery, why, lock, stock, and barrel, it went on the auction block.

Riess: This is an experience that many Japanese of your father's generation had?

Domoto: There were some bankruptcies, but not too many bankruptcies. I only remember about three other families connected with Japanese that had to go through bankruptcy. At that time, to go into bankruptcy, it was a dishonor. These days, why, it's a matter of convenience. A change in attitude. Once you were in bankruptcy, in those days, it was dishonor, and you couldn't get any credit anywhere. That's the way it was.

Riess: Your father felt dishonored by this experience?

Domoto: I think so. Because the debts that either my father or uncle had incurred, they weren't able to pay them off. Like on some of my father's purchases, which was mostly nursery stock at that time, there were people who he would import nursery stock from. And at that time, I was already producing my camellias, I had plants here, and I furnished them the plants in trade, so that it cleared my father's portion of that.

Riess: When they moved into the house in Hayward that you were able to get for them, were they able to live a serene life? Were the neighbors good to them?

Domoto: I'd say most of them, they didn't object, although I think in most cases we tried to avoid going to town. But my sisters, they were

still in school, my brother was in school. The neighbors--they would sort of talk, they weren't--I don't think there was any show of extra friendliness, but they weren't antagonists either. More or less neutral. But in the town itself, in the Hayward city--I call it town in those days--there were some people that were "anti." Those we would just avoid.

Joining Nurserymen's Associations

Domoto: In fact, one of the things I remember is one of the merchants, I think he was a lumberman, who was quite active in the Rotary Club. He wanted me to go and join the Rotary Club. He wanted me to go, several times. I declined to go. I said, "For one of the reasons, during the week I'm not dressed to go to a luncheon." Of course, he was in the lumber business, he wouldn't be dressed up either. But you know, a lot more than doing farm work.

I had been through that before, where some of the members that were really Rotary-conscious, or Kiwanis-conscious, were trying to assimilate with the other less fortunates, but I had always sensed that they really wanted to do good for you. Just like a church minister coming out to try to get you to join the congregation. But it's sometimes embarrassing for them to try to get out of some members that are kind of crude and rude. I didn't feel that I had to join it, being that I could go my way and not worry about it. A lot, like Kiwanis and Rotary and those things, I never joined.

Riess: Even though you were a young businessman?

Domoto: Oh, I was friendly with them, some of them I used to know really well personally, but I said I didn't want to put them through the embarrassment that I would have to go through sometimes.

Riess: Well, that's a generous way of putting it, to look out for their embarrassment.

Domoto: It's because of the way I used to feel earlier. I didn't want them to have the feeling of being embarrassed. I knew when they were real friendly--some of them were social do-gooders, and those I avoided altogether. But the ones that I got to know real well, who were real friendly, I didn't want to have their feelings hurt any more than--.

Riess: You mean because of their association with you, they would be put through some social awkwardness?

Domoto: Yes. Quite a number of years before I was even invited to become a member of the California Association of Nurserymen. At that time, a man at the Star Nursery in southern California, Uye Matsu, and myself, were invited to Yosemite for initiation into the California Association of Nurserymen.

Riess: And you said yes to that?

Domoto: Yes. Even that I didn't want to go.

Riess: When was that?

Domoto: [thinking] I have to think back. Before the war.

Riess: Was there a local chapter?

Domoto: No, the California association was a state organization. We had a chapter here, Central California Nurserymen's Association, and we were doing quite well. I had been secretary and president before that.

Riess: And why did you feel better about the local chapter?

Domoto: Well, they were hypocrites.

Riess: Which were hypocrites?

Domoto: The California Association at first.

Riess: The California Association of Nurserymen were hypocrites?

Domoto: Yes. Not all of them, but the ones that were directors or the president's group, they were handshakers.

Riess: And yet at the same time they would do anything to take the business away from you?

Domoto: Either that, or as long as they could get something that was worthwhile from me, why, I was a friend.

Riess: But the local group?

Domoto: The Central California group was a much smaller group, a more intimate group. So we got to know some of those. In fact, I was doing some secretary work at one part of it, the secretary for the association, but I was never a good secretary, so I--. There was a man who, I think he was a manager for a California nursery, he took over the secretaryship, and I was president for a couple of years, I guess.

Riess: Did that group have other Japanese members than yourself?

Domoto: I don't think at that time.

See, most of the Japanese around here were in the cut flower business. They had their flower market group. There were some nurseries, but very few of the members were second-generation. Most of them were older. I don't think they even invited some of them.

Riess: What sorts of things were you doing as a group of nurserymen, banded together? Pricing?

Domoto: More or less pricing, probably, and working hours, labeling the plants so that the people know what they are buying.

Riess: In other words, trying to become more professional.

Domoto: Yes, instead of backyard gardeners.

Riess: Yes, and in that way you probably brought a lot to the group, because you probably had a better education than a lot of them, didn't you?

Domoto: On horticulture? Yes. Because not only school-wise, but for growing up in the business, my father was one of the pioneers in the nursery side.

Choice of Nursery Location in Hayward: Water, Manure

Riess: Why did you buy in Hayward? Why was Hayward where you wanted to locate your nursery?

Domoto: Because it was the nearest place I could find land that I felt was in keeping with what I might be able to pay off at that time. The space on East 14th Street, where Lewelling goes from East 14th to San Leandro Village, next to the creek, the Hayward Creek, there was a nice strip in there, and I wanted to buy it. But the price was too high; I just couldn't afford it.

Riess: Was it important to you that the land be fertile?

Domoto: Oh, yes. I had to find good land, and not only that, but water. Because those are the two main things: water, and soil.

As far as the sales were concerned, I was used to seeing plants shipped out more, because in the younger days, my father used to import and then sell the imported material. And selling, we had a wider range. Most of the other nurseries were local home garden nurseries, where they would sell to the people in the area.

Riess: So did that mean you had to be near a train?

Domoto: Yes. At one time, there used to be a spur track here. I figured if I went into the cut flower side, I could use it, or even for nursery stock, I could use the spur track. Now the spur track is gone. That triangular piece, that belongs to the railroad.

Riess: And how did you figure that the soil was good? Did you come and actually test the soil with a little soil testing kit?

Domoto: No. Soil testing is actually--. In college we had some soil agronomy, but that is [not the best way?] unless you know the technique. But if it is good orchard land, and if you look at the trees and the trees look pretty good, and you test for--.

See otherwise, the main thing is water. I checked the wells around and they had some water. But after I started to dig, why, it wasn't too good at first. We finally found a well. Like the cemetery, that was up above there, and they had their own creek, and they were pumping. But when we dug, and the drought came along, and our well started to run dry, we found out we were in a poor water district.

Riess: And then did you dig another one?

Domoto: I dug two others, and we got enough to work with. The first one I still use, and the others I don't.

Riess: You were a real Hayward pioneer.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: You said that there were a number of houses here. What were the residents of Hayward doing? Were they in businesses in Hayward?

Domoto: Well, Hayward was a small town. We had the banks and furnishing stores, men's furnishings, restaurants. Mainly agriculture. And certain parts around here used to be the poultry.

Riess: You could get manure?

Domoto: No, manure we had to buy from out of the area. There were one or two dairies, but they were few and small.

Riess: I talked to Wayne Roderick, who grew up in Petaluma, and his father would bring down truckloads of chicken manure. You might have contracted with someone from an area like that for manure?

Domoto: Most of them, I think the poultry farmers in the Petaluma area used to sell to the truck gardeners, because they could use the fertilizer.

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Riess: You were saying the fertilizer business has changed dramatically.

Domoto: Yes. Before, either they would clean it up and deliver it to us and charge us, or else we'd go by some of the dairy barns, we'd go there and pick up the manure, they would sell it to us. Later, it got to be commercial. You'd buy it. They'd bring it by the truckload. Most of it was hauled in to other areas.

Financing and Refinancing

Riess: There must have been so much to start up this business on your part. You bought the land. How did you finance it? Did you get a loan from a bank in Hayward?

Domoto: No, it just happened the landowner--I think he was Danish, first generation, name was Sorensen--when I went to talk about purchase of the land, told him what I was going to do, he said if I put improvements on the land, either greenhouses or buildings or whatever, nursery stock, if I was able to show him that I was putting improvements in the place right away, he said as long as I paid my taxes and paid the interest I could use the payment of the principal towards the improvement of the property.

Riess: What amazing terms!

Domoto: That part was all right. The main part is that when the war came along, he said, "Don't take the property. As long as he can keep the taxes paid, give him a chance."

Riess: That's wonderful. Sorensen was still there.

Domoto: Yes. After the war his son had a chance to sell the property, to take it and sell it, and I was able to make a loan from the bank.

But before that, a man, an outside salesman for Foremost Dairy, he said, "Hey, there's a good chance now to buy the

property out. I'll lend you the money." I said, "No. I don't want to." I went to the bank, and they loaned me the money. Believe or not, at that period of Depression, acreage out here, around here, was about half what I had agreed to pay for it. And the piece that I wanted to buy on East 14th Street, I could have bought that for the price I bought this piece here. There was that much difference in price.

Riess: The place on East 14th was how big?

Domoto: Oh, that was around sixty-four acres or something. It went from East 14th Street to the Western Pacific track, right along the creek.

Riess: And this was so much more expensive?

Domoto: At that time. You see, when I bought the property it was at the high point of the real estate, and then when the Depression hit, it had come down to about half the value. So the property here was selling for less than half what I had agreed to pay for it.

Riess: You bought in 1926, which was before the Depression.

Domoto: Yes. And at almost the highest point. So when I came back after the war [World War II], and pieces of property around here were selling for much less, I asked him, "May I pay you off? Will you cut this down to what the land value is here now?" He said, "Well, we didn't foreclose on it, and so at least you can pay us what you agreed to pay for it." And of course, the father was gone. I think if the father was alive, I think he would agree to compromise between the agreed price and the actual value at the time. But the son was younger and didn't feel that way. He never had the hardship that his dad did.

Sorensen Family

Domoto: The person, the way the family grows up--. Hans Sorensen came and started working for the orchard people, farm work. At that time, he told me, the place on the other side of Tennyson Road, where it's all built up now, that used to be a duck pond back in the wintertime. No drain. He bought that piece of property, and as he worked and saved he would move this way across Tennyson Road to higher land. And he owned this piece all through here, up to the creek, where the creek crosses, and then up to Mission Boulevard

in the orchard area. He planted the orchards, the apricot orchards, and gradually improved himself land-wise.

Riess: And yet his story was a story of hardship?

Domoto: Oh, yes. He knew what it was to be almost down and out. And he could see if a person was really putting in what I had put in, he knew that as far as the investment was concerned, he was protected.

Riess: Is he someone you became friendly with socially, or was it always a business relationship?

Domoto: No. Very few--. As far as going over to the house, because they had a house right down below where the school is now, going over and talking with him and his wife, but as far as social groups, why never.

Riess: He would have been in Rotary, maybe?

Domoto: He'd go once in a while, but being a farmer in that way, no. Once in a while he would go, but not regular.

His brother, or his sister--family--more or less grouped together, had started a mortuary in Hayward, Sorensen's Mortuary. I think he might have loaned some money to them, but as far as being in with the business, I don't think he was.

But it's just a case of having known a person that's come up the hard way, and they appreciate what somebody else is doing. Whereas the others, I used to call them four-flushers.

Riess: I'm sure you have known four-flushers.

Domoto: Oh, yes, but you don't say anything about it.

"Backyard Gardeners"

Domoto: Like the nursery industry--this would be another part of it--in the early days, the young nursery stock, we used to plant everything in flower pots, clay pots. But in southern California the Japanese gardeners down there that went out and gardened, they would bring the clippings home and make cuttings. That's where the term "backyard gardeners" started.

Clay pots in those days were very few and hard to get, unless you had contracted ahead of time. There were only one or two suppliers down there in southern California. Most of those were contracted with white growers, and then the backyard gardeners couldn't buy the pots--

Riess: What do you mean by white growers? Caucasian?

Domoto: Caucasian, yes.

Riess: And so the backyard gardeners couldn't get them?

Domoto: Right. So then they used to go to restaurants, and these gallon cans of food, the discarded cans, they would pick them up or buy them, and then bring them in and they'd plant right in those cans. Of course, a lot of them still had the tomato label or the peach label right on there. But they knew what soil [to use], and so they'd grow the plants, and they would sell them.

A lot of the fast-growing things were produced down there, and the central California nurseries would go down there and buy them and bring them up to sell. One of the growers up here said, "Don't patronize those backyard gardeners." He was one of the worst of the hypocrites. He was a state official too, at the time. He would send his trucks down there and buy the cans, bring them up, and he would put them into clay pots or larger containers. And yet he said, "He wasn't buying from the Japs down there."

Riess: Under the table dealings.

Domoto: Yes. "Don't do as I do, but do as I tell you." It's the other way around. [laughs]

Even the canning industry, in the Bay Area here, that changed from one company--I think we used to call it Nursery Pot and Container Corporation of San Francisco--they started to sign up all the big hotels and restaurants for the old cans. I think the plant was in San Francisco at the time. But they contracted and were getting all the used cans.

The canneries, in the season, if the market wasn't there, they would can it [food] in the gallon cans, and then they would open the cans and re-can into smaller retail packages. They'd cut the cans and then repack. So they'd have a whole bunch of the gallon cans, and those cans, they would be able to get a lot of them from them. They used to buy them, and they were the first ones around here that started to dip the cans and coat them with I think it was tar.

Riess: "They?" What's the company?

Domoto: I think now it's called Nursery Metal and Container.

Riess: I have a reprint of a booklet here that Charlie Burr put together for the Peninsula Chapter of California Association of Nurserymen, and he talks about getting metal containers because of the sardine canning industry in Monterey. That's where they would get them. And there was a Henry Green, a nurseryman from San Jose, and he got to be called Tin Can Green.

Domoto: That's probably for that area there. But for the whole bigger area--and still operating, they moved down to San Jose--they [Nursery Metal] were really a much bigger operation than Green, because they were in San Francisco, and they were making other things too, but they were getting all these cans.

[tape interruption]

The Camellia Era

Riess: When you started in business, how did you decide what you were going to specialize in, and how did you find the contacts? Did you go back to the same people your father had used?

Domoto: Well, some we did. My father's original business was raising both cut flowers, and nursery stock. But nursery stock--his part was mainly in importing and selling imported plants from Japan and Europe. So then, when the quarantine came in, those things changed. My first start, I was in the camellia era, when camellias became very popular.

Riess: You mean as cut flowers?

Domoto: No, as plants. As cut flowers, that was something that developed more or less by the growers down south. Locally, because of my connections with a retail florist here, I started selling my flowers as cut flowers.

Riess: You decided the first thing you would specialize in would be camellia stock?

Domoto: Yes. At that time, that was the thing that was coming. But my original lathhouse, except for those sections where I had some miscellaneous stock, the whole thing, the whole lathhouse, was in young camellia plants. About the time they got to be a marketable

size, which would be about two, three years, then the Depression came along. So that's when they grew tall in there. I wasn't able to sell them, and I moved them outside.

Camellia Corsages

Riess: When you were going full-bore around here, how many people did you have working for you? When did you have the greatest number of employees?

Domoto: I guess during the period when I was making camellia corsages, probably for three or four years here. After the war, when I got back I just had two greenhouses, and I increased that to two more greenhouses, and mainly for the cut camellia flowers. Then the older plants, from the first group I had planted that got too tall during the Depression, and we planted out in the field, I used them for the foliage to get the backing for the corsage.

McLellan in San Francisco--at first they were using gardenias with their natural foliage, and then it got so that that part of the process became too costly-- later they started to get these artificial plastic collars. So I followed suit with that. They used to call them "Hong Kong collars" because they were made in Hong Kong. Not for the top grade, but for the second and third grade they used to use the artificial collars. The best flowers, they used the natural foliage. But that just fell by the wayside, it was too costly.

Riess: When that was a big business here, how many did you employ?

Domoto: I'm not sure. Part-time workers, I used to have about fourteen women working at one time.

Riess: From the neighborhood?

Domoto: Neighborhood. A good many of them were wives or daughters of families that after the evacuation came back into the area, and had no place to do anything else. It was seasonal, because it would only be generally from around Thanksgiving until after maybe Easter. Then they wouldn't have any more flowers. So it was very seasonal.

Riess: Was it all Japanese-American women?

Domoto: Most of them were the younger Nisei that were from families that lived in the area, or that had relocated to the area. Most of them were members of families that used to do farming around.

But it was just a sort of a temporary deal for them to find something to do in the interim while they were getting readjusted. In fact several, I think two or three of the ones that worked, they had gone into nursing. One of the ladies [Joy Tsurui], she used to be the foreman for the group, she's retired now, but she took on, twice a week, my correspondence, and tended to that part of it for me. That's over forty-one, forty-two years.

Riess: You were looking out for these women.

Domoto: It happened because of my connections in Chicago with the growers there, and then the wholesale houses that we used to ship to before, and then the popularity came, and other growers couldn't supply the [flowers]. Other growers, some of them tried to go and pick flowers in the garden, camellias, and send them in, but the quality wasn't there. And for the price they were, they had to be good. And that's why I had the greenhouse built, just for that purpose.

A Working Day: Peter Milan

Riess: Could you describe what you would be doing on a typical day then?

Domoto: It would depend on the season. Holiday season, making up and shipping out corsages. They would pack the boxes. And instead of having somebody running down to United Airlines to ship out, I would take the boxes down before deadline down there. So in those days probably from morning, and then getting back around seven, a good twelve-hour day, maybe longer. But then in between if I wasn't packing I would be doing something else. So there was no typical day, as such.

In the spring season, of course, when people are planting, it would be busy. I used to have two persons who could wait on the customers who came in for general nursery stock. If somebody wanted big specimen plants, I would have to wait on them, but generally for the small plants, the commercial-size plants, the two men I had with me, they would wait on them.

Riess: Were there customers who always asked for you?

Domoto: Those like that were generally asking for the bigger plants. Some would phone ahead of time to find out if I would be around. The average one that would come in, either one of the other two, Pete [Peter Milan] or Frank [Araki], could take care of them.¹ They knew the stock. The rhododendrons and azaleas, we didn't grow them ourselves, we brought them in for resale. The only ones we grew were some of the small varieties that weren't generally available.

Riess: How long was Peter Milan with you?

Domoto: I think he started after high school. After I came back [from relocation] he was drafted, and he had to go into the service. Then after he came out of the service he was able to get a job as city gardener for Hayward. Friends I had set up the examination so that only he would fulfill the demand--"so many years of nursery experience, and that sort of thing." He got that job. And then he retired. I saw him here about a month ago.

Riess: After his time in the service, he didn't come back to you?

Domoto: He came back for a while, but as far as his future, there wasn't too much different in what he was doing here. When they started looking for city gardener, they asked me if I thought Pete would do a good job. I said I thought he would. And there was better pay involved, and more future for him there. He asked me, and I said, "Sure, go ahead."

Father and Son

Riess: When you were starting out here and your father was living in Hayward, did he come and help you on the place every day, or was he not in good health?

Domoto: No. He was mainly helpful when I was trying to import the varieties of camellias from Japan. He could read the Japanese catalogue, or if there was correspondence made with Japan, he'd write that for me.

Riess: But he didn't want to just be down here and hang out?

¹Another early employee was Alfred Alameda. He was very handy, an all-around handyman, very clever with the tools. Even now when I need something I call on him. He wasn't highly educated, but very intelligent, and resourceful. [dictated by Mr. Domoto]

Domoto: No. He said he knew it was mine, and I should do what I wanted to do.

I remember one of the comments--he didn't make it to me, but to one of my customers. When we started out retail, my father's old customers would come out. They'd drive in the road, and it not being gravel, the road in the wintertime would get kind of wet. I know some of the chauffeurs didn't like it, because when they'd get back, they had to wash their cars. [laughter]

I had a customer who was in the rock and gravel business, and they were just getting started into paving work. He said, "Let me pave this for you. You don't need to pay me, and I can take some plants out on you."

"No," I said, "I'd rather pay you if I can, rather than the other way around, because I know what you're putting in, but you don't know what you're getting from me. If it dies, you might feel that you were gypped. So I'd rather do it that way."

My dad made a comment--I've forgotten whether it was a chauffeur, or who told me afterwards--"Your dad said, 'These young ones, they have high ideas--' [pause] 'You have to have everything all paid.'" He laughed about that. I think about that, he shouldn't laugh. It was a costly thing, but then it made it much easier when you'd come in and drive around.

Nursery Equipment. Forging. Sharpening

[Interview 4: August 12, 1992] ##

Domoto: [talking about making mechanical equipment for the nursery] It used to be you could go to the blacksmith shop and tell them kind of what you want, and they'd figure out something to work with.

Riess: They could probably use some of those designs today?

Domoto: Oh, yes. The only thing is it would cost too much to make, because there is not enough quantity use for it. So either it would be a custom-made job for just that one thing--and they can't survive that way--or else the costs would be too prohibitive.

Riess: And probably there isn't a blacksmith to make it anyway.

Domoto: No. They don't know about heating or anything.

Riess: Where did you go for that kind of equipment when you were setting up your nursery?

Domoto: There used to be an old blacksmith [Merritt?] in Oakland, old family, and they were good at forging. The tools they'd make, they'd stay sharp. They knew how to temper material. They used to be on High Street and East 14th in Oakland.

Riess: And when you needed to have your tools sharpened, would they come to you?

Domoto: No. Most of the tools could be sharpened at home, with the old grindstone, the sandstone, where they drip water on it, and someone's feet paddling it. Of course, we had the emery wheel too, but the emery wheel, unless you're careful you lose the temper in your tool. Whereas the sandstone with the water dripping, it was slow but it would do a better job.

Riess: Did you have a sandstone grinder? That was one of your pieces of equipment?

Domoto: For a while I did, but then I gave it to someone who wanted it. By that time the employees I had wouldn't know how to use the grindstone, and this fellow wanted it more as a nursery piece.

The sandstone grinders, they were available commercially because the blacksmiths and the farmers all used to have that, to sharpen their tools. Most of them were foot bars, and somebody had to pump it to keep it going. And then later, of course, they would be hooked onto a gasoline engine or motor, but by the time they got the motor, then they started going to the more hard carborundum grinders.

Clearing the Land. Workers

Riess: When you bought this piece of land, it had been orchard land?

Domoto: It was an apricot orchard.

Riess: And so first of all, you had to get rid of all of the oak root fungus or whatever?

Domoto: No, it was just a matter of getting the trees yanked out, and then as much of the roots as we could get out. Of course, in the valley they had these big tractors, but around here, unless you got a Caterpillar, it was mostly Fordson tractors, so they

couldn't go very deep with their power tools to root out the roots.

Riess: Fordson is just a small tractor?

Domoto: It was one that the Ford Company made, called Ford-aon, and that was probably the agricultural tractor for the small farmers. Along about that early period, these--the Caterpillar track-layer type of tractors were being developed by Holt in Stockton.

Riess: Did you have one of them?

Domoto: No. Most of that type of work I had done, because I wouldn't have use for it all the time.

Riess: Initially, you had to clear the land.

Domoto: Yes. And for a while there I had laborers coming in with a mattock and pick and shovel, and they'd do about as good a job as the tractors, because unless they did a slow job with the tractor, the tops would break off. They used to have a tool they called a stump-puller. Actually, it was just a power winch, that is, a winch that you work by hand. You attach cables from one tree to the other, and keep on pulling it over.

Riess: Did you have Mexican workers?

Domoto: No, in those days they were, in this area, mostly Portuguese, or they were native farm folks, small farmers who didn't have work all year round, and they would come in. But mostly Portuguese, American-born.

The Mexican population was later. See, the first wave of laborers agriculturally were the Chinese. They came in for the railroad work, the Central Pacific. After that ran out, then they started to go to work in the fields. And then after the Chinese, then the Japanese came in. And then after the Japanese, it was the braceros, or Mexicans, and along about the same time, then the Filipinos came in. Most all of those were for field work, not for the heavy work, but for the truck garden type of work--they call it the stoop labor.

Riess: The Portuguese were American-born, you said?

Domoto: Well, some were. Some were American-born. But like in the Hayward area, there were quite a few that came from the Azores.

Riess: Was there a language problem?

Domoto: No. Most of them--a good many of them had a foreman that could talk. It's the same with all the other labor crews. And as it went on it got so that if the small farms needed help, they contacted a labor contractor, and he'd bring the help out. My neighbor, who was still farming his apricot orchard, he used to bring a group of help in from West Oakland.

Riess: He would be the contact that you would use?

Domoto: If I needed it, but I didn't have to--much of my help were local people, local residents, that got the work.

Riess: You needed labor when you were clearing the land, but then after that?

Domoto: Well, even the land, I wasn't clearing a big bunch at one time. I was only clearing the land as I needed it. The apricot trees were still producing some. And then for digging, it was better in the winter months when the ground was wet; you didn't have to soak the ground to yank it out. So it worked out pretty good.

Riess: When did you plant the redwoods that are now such a stand?

Domoto: Well, those were probably planted along between '28 and '30. But they weren't planted for a hedge, they were planted with the idea of growing something larger for landscape use. But soon after the Depression came, and there was no demand. I had the row of redwoods, and I had a nursery row--I had a couple of rows, and I had a row of deodar cedars, and Atlantic cedars. [Cedrus deodar and Cedrus Atlantica]

The Whitman Road Area

Riess: When you opened your doors, how did you advertise?

Domoto: I didn't advertise. I didn't have the funds to go ahead and--I wasn't equipped for selling. The few things I did grow were mostly sold through other nurseries or jobbers, so I wasn't doing any direct sales that way. I didn't get into the retail side of it until much later.

Riess: The Domoto Nursery sign that I see when I come in, is that the same sign that you put up in 1926?

Domoto: No, that's much later. I didn't even have a sign in the old days.

Riess: Of course, it must have looked very different. Was Whitman Street an important street?

Domoto: No. That used to come from Tennyson up as far as the creek here, and that was called Sorensen Lane. Then later it changed to Sorensen Road, to Western Boulevard, and then to Whitman. That's because Sorensen Lane used to end right at the creek. But to go out to Mission, we used to go right out Sorensen where the overpass is here. After the track came in they closed that off. And then later, you'd go to Harder Road and you'd go out to Mission. But traffic has been changing so much since then with the BART.

Riess: With BART, was there an attempt to buy this land? Was that an issue?

Domoto: No. BART, they just had the right-of-way, and you see, this BART here, most of them followed the Western Pacific tracks. Western Pacific, they had a pretty wide piece of property, because as I understand in the early days, the railroads were put in with the idea that--and they would get a certain amount of easement much cheaper because it was open land.

In fact, right here, a triangle piece next to my property, that used to be a Western Pacific railroad siding. They could load the cars. The station was put there because Mr. Sorensen had donated the land to the railroad if they would put a station and a stop. And for a while I understand that his sons used to get on the train here to go into either Hayward, or I guess Oakland, to go to school, and come back.

Then later, of course, I guess it would be about the time of the second Depression, it got so they were having trouble with people putting stuff on the tracks so they would derail. They had some bad derailments. So then they closed the station out because the bums used to sleep in there.

WPA. Mills College. Deodar Cedars

Riess: When you say the first and second Depression, which is the first?

Domoto: The first must have been around in '29. The worst one, to me, was the first one. The next one would be along about in the--[pause] must be in the seventies. It wasn't as bad as the first one. I think the WPA Work Projects were started during the first Depression.

Riess: Yes, but the second one you're saying was in the 1970s?

Domoto: Yes. Not as bad, but as far as the nursery business was concerned, there were no sales at all.

Riess: And of course, that's a very good gauge, isn't it, the nursery business. Because it's a luxury?

Domoto: Yes. It depends on what type of nursery business you're in, but when building drops and no new homes go in, the nursery industry changes, too.

But the WPA-- . In those days I had a group, a row, of deodar cedars that were about eight feet tall, getting too close to the nursery row. They [WPA] were looking for some work to do, and Mills College in Oakland had just--the road alongside Seminary Avenue into what is now McArthur, I guess, that road along the side that was put in there--I think that was when they had just built the women's new dormitory there--along that roadside they decided they would have some trees planted while they were doing the work.

So the WPA fellows would come out and work half a day digging the trees. They had one foreman that knew something about it, but even then, he didn't know much. My man had to tell him what to do. They would have a tree half-dug and not balled up and just left there. My foreman said, "Gee, I wonder if those trees are going to live."

And it's surprising, I forget how many trees went there, but of all the bunch, only one, the last one down the line, didn't make it. All the others made it. With all that green help. And half of them they didn't even know how to even tie the root ball up well so it didn't get broken!

Riess: How old were the deodars then? You wouldn't have had them in for that long.

Domoto: No. The deodars, they were planted out from five-gallon cans, so then they were about eight, nine feet, I guess. Not much taller than that. The balls had to be about twenty-inch balls, something like that. Took about two to four men to handle it. All hand-dug holes and plant them in, and water them. It just happened to be the right season of the year.

Riess: Perfect WPA project! How was that put together?

Domoto: I think they were looking for things to do, or nurseries that would donate something.

Riess: Oh, you donated them?

Domoto: Yes. My sisters and cousins went to Mills, and my dad knew the real Mrs. Mills, and I got to know Dr. [Aurelia] Reinhardt. I guess it's because I knew her, and the fact that my sisters had gone there, I thought it was a good place to donate the trees to.

I don't know if the trees are still there or not, but if there is a big row of deodars right along the road--and they would be about as tall as my Atlanticas that I have here, because they'd be about the same age--unless they had to make room for planting, they would probably still be there. Because it would make a nice screen for the campus.

On Not Visiting Gardens

Riess: I remember asking you once about whether you liked to go and see places where your material had gone, and you said it didn't make any difference.

Domoto: No. I really hardly ever went out to see the places, because we had several customers in different areas, and if I'd go out to see one, I'd have to--somebody else would ask me. And in order to keep on good terms, I'd have to go to theirs. I'd be out visiting people's gardens.

Riess: You could go in dark glasses and disguise. [laughter]

Domoto: No. Those days, most of those people would probably belong to a garden club, or a social club, and say, "Oh, Mr. Domoto came out and looked at my garden." I'd never hear the end of it then. Even to go out to Mrs. Blake's garden--she always used to invite me to come out and look at different things she'd got in. She and her sister, Miss [Mabel] Symmes.

Riess: I was thinking maybe you had some kind of philosophy that once the plant has left you--some way that you're not involved, something to explain that lack of curiosity, because isn't it like looking at grandchildren or something?

Domoto: No. Most of the time I was just happy to know that they were having it growing well for them. A lot of it would depend on the gardener that they had, too. I would try to make sure that when they [plants] left the place that they were in the best condition. I tried to fit the plants for the climatic and soil conditions I knew for the area.

Riess: Would you go and look before they were planted?

Domoto: No, that would be up to the landscape gardener, landscape person.

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Riess: You and I talked in our interview in 1981 about Filoli and Mrs. [Lurline] Roth. Did you have a role in her decision about the future of Filoli?

Domoto: The main thing I remember is we had a field trip for the Hort Society to visit the garden down there. They were going to come down--and of course I went from here directly ahead to make arrangements--and I arrived there before the group did. Mrs. Roth was looking around through the garden and talking about plants.

The only inkling I had that she might do that--I didn't even think about it at the time--she said, "Mr. Domoto, what do you think this would be as a public garden?" I didn't ask her why, or what she thought, or what she had in mind. She was looking down through the garden there. She said, "Do you think people would appreciate it? "Yes," I said, "I'm pretty sure they would." That's the only thing I ever mentioned to her about that.

Riess: Did you talk to any of the Hort Society people or Strybing people about that conversation?

Domoto: About that? No. Those things I never--people ask about what to do--I never enter into.

Riess: You weren't a go-between?

Domoto: No. That's one of the things I am kind of shy of doing. So many people, they get enthused with their garden idea, they get started, and then there's no workers to stay with it to finish it off. I've seen so many gardens that way. Rather than get started and have it fold up, I'd rather see it not started. That was my philosophy.

The Japanese gardens that were put in, so many [have been lost]. The bigger gardens, like the Golden Gate Park, of course, there have been several generations changing, improving it, coming in, and then changing it again. But the smaller gardens that have been put in in some of the smaller park areas, they have been lost altogether. The trees outgrow themselves, and unless they are kept pruned, and unless they have skill, it's lost.

Jobbers: W. B. Clarke

Riess: When you talk about not advertising when you started out in 1927, and not going out and looking at people's gardens, then who were your main contacts for sales?

Domoto: That ran in different stages. My lath houses were built in '26, '27, just before the Depression, and at that time, I was selling most of the camellia plants to other nurserymen, or jobbers.

Riess: Any in particular?

Domoto: No, most any of the ones around the area that were selling plants.

Riess: Were the jobbers all Caucasian?

Domoto: Yes, mainly so. The best one around at that time was Walter Clarke, W. B. Clarke, in San Jose. Clarke Nursery. He was a broker--at one time he was nursery salesman for the Pilkington Nursery, and they had opened a place in I think San Mateo, and then had the space in San Jose. Then the main home place was in Oregon. Mr. Clarke used to go around selling their products, going out to all the retail nurseries around.

I guess it must have been the Depression time when Pilkington was in financial difficulty. I don't know if they went into bankruptcy or not, but they sold the place, and then Mr. Clarke bought the San Jose branch. Then he started to grow material. I always say, as far as introducing a lot of the ornamental plants, mostly ornamental plants, he was one of the pioneers who really disseminated the material they brought in.

I would say he was at least two years or three years ahead of the other growers, because since he traveled around to all the retail nurseries to sell the things, he could see what was selling. Or if he'd see a novelty there that looked good, he would start propagating it. So he was a man that knew about the source, and probably knew the demand. He may not have known how to grow it, but he had to just get growers to do the growing.

Riess: In your case, would he take whatever you had, or was he having you propagate for him?

Domoto: No. He would order so many, and we would supply his order.

Riess: But it was an incentive to develop material, to have someone like that, I suppose.

Domoto: Yes. At least I didn't have to worry about trying to go out and sell the material. I wasn't in that heavy production either, so between what he sold, and a few of the other small local nurseries would come in and order, I sold my total output.

Riess: In terms of size of your nursery, would it have been considered to be small or medium?

Domoto: The lath house was pretty near two acres, and that was all in camellias, except for a few azaleas.

Riess: Did that make you the largest camellia grower in the Bay Area?

Domoto: For out here, one of the larger ones. I guess commercially, ground grown, I was probably one of the largest in the ground here in California. Then others came in later with the commercial gallon can growing.

Riess: Back to Clarke. When he was trying to create a market, would he put on a big display at the Garden Show?

IX GARDEN SHOWS, JAPANESE PLANT MATERIALS POPULARIZED

Location, Logistics, Funding ##

Domoto: As far as the first garden show in Oakland, that was held in the old Earle C. Anthony Packard Building by the lake [Lake Merritt]. That was the first really big garden show of this area.

After that first year the place was too small. I guess even before that I think there used to be a Studebaker Building where they had the first little garden show.

Riess: You mean they would clear the cars out and just move the plants in?

Domoto: Oh, yes, and the Packard--when that Earle C. Anthony Building was built, that first year, I think they were able to get the use of the building for free if they would let them leave one car in there for advertising. And then they had the roof part where they would do some work, and they had gardens put up there. And if anybody wanted to, they could ride a Packard up to the top to see. Then, from the Anthony Building then they went into the Oakland Auditorium. Not the auditorium side, but the display side, the Civic Auditorium.

Later the Exposition Building was built, and of all the flower shows that were held, the one that Howard Gilkey designed, he was the designer, was the one that the old-timers remember. That was when he created the redwood effect, the pillars and the columns. He covered them with great big pieces of redwood slabs to make it look like a redwood tree. The theme, I guess, was supposed to be native plants or gardens, something like that.

There were a lot of other shows, too, but that was the one that the old-timers seem to remember most, because of the feeling of being really outdoors.

Riess: And waterfalls.

Domoto: Waterfalls, yes.

And then they used to have the commercial exhibits in the old auditorium side. You could go across the street from one to the other.

Riess: The attendance would have been mostly homeowners?

Domoto: Oh, it was a regular show, garden show. Tours.

Riess: But it was a new idea to have these out here?

Domoto: Out here it was, that type of show, big show. Your eastern areas like New York and Philadelphia, they used to have their annual flower shows there. Where out here, though, most of the shows were much smaller and were outdoors, much smaller.

Riess: How do they put together the money for a show like that?

Domoto: I don't know much of the finances, but I heard that Howard Gilkey never stayed within his budget, and would always go over the budget. That was why he was able to create such nice shows. In other words, it would go so far, and he wouldn't hesitate about using the extra to create the effect.

One year [1935] I think the board had enough of it, and they decided to hire somebody else. I think it was [Butler] Sturtevant. He put a show on. It was all right, but it didn't create the "Ooh, aah" that the Howard Gilkey shows did. Then they went back to Howard for a while.

Riess: Did the funding come from nursery groups, or what?

Domoto: The nursery groups, we had to pay for the space in the building, but if we did a job and got a prize for it-- . By that time, the State Fair Board would allow a certain amount of money to be allocated out for [prize-winning] exhibits. If you signed up for so many square feet, you had to pay so many dollars. But if the display was good enough, you'd get maybe 80, 90 percent of the cost of the rental back. So most of the display work--the exhibitors paid for their own exhibits for the space.

Riess: It sounds like the backing was from the state?

Domoto: And I think there were probably merchants, or members of the Oakland Business Men's Garden Club, I think they more or less-- certain members kind of underwrote the deal.

Riess: I've heard that's a very active group.

Domoto: It was, yes.

Riess: Did you join?

Domoto: I was a member for a while, but it's a luncheon meeting, a Friday luncheon, and I found out I'd have to change my clothing and go in. Once in a while I'd go in, but never was really active as far as directing or anything like that.

Some Nurseryman Contemporaries

Riess: At some point, I want to talk about all of these groups with you. I've got a couple of names under this section that I had on garden shows. Floyd Mick.

Domoto: Yes. He was a landscape designer. I think he was very friendly with George Budgen of Berkeley Hort. The displays that Berkeley Hort put in the garden, I think he helped design those.

Riess: George Budgen is your generation?

Domoto: About my generation. He started after I did. At the time he first started he was in fuchsias, and Fuchsia Society. I think that he and Mr. Mick were about the same age bracket, and same group.

Riess: Was Budgen always in that location in Berkeley?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: And some of the other names. Who was Peter Valinga?

Domoto: He was a Hollander that came from Holland, and I guess it had to be--I forgot what year. But his first show at one of the garden shows, I forgot which one, he had Dutch bulbs brought in forced for the flower show. And then at the show he and his wife had these wooden clogs and Dutch costumes to hand out the circulars. His main income, I guess at first, was to go around to different estates and homes, taking orders for the Dutch bulbs for fall delivery.

Riess: And then he would go back to Holland?

Domoto: No, he lived in--I think he had a place in Palo Alto.

Riess: When the garden show was going on, were you there, and did you stand as a businessman?

Domoto: No. I kind of arranged the plants, and then I had different landscapers who would do the arranging. My brother I think did a couple of shows, designed the shows. I'd send the plants down. As far as being there to hand out cards and that kind of thing, I never did, because I wasn't in that kind of a business at all.

Riess: But would there be someone there?

Domoto: Sometimes no. Just a display card.

Riess: Was your brother back in the area by then, or would he just come to do that?

Domoto: No, he was here. That was before the war, so he was around this area here. That was the later--. Of course the earlier shows, I had different people who did the design work. Like for the San Leandro Flower Show, and the Oakland show, there was a gardener.

Riess: Who?

Domoto: Mr. Asai. He later became the gardener for the Welch family in San Mateo, Andrew Welch.

Riess: And Mr. Asai was Japanese?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Had you known him from school?

Domoto: No. He used to have a yard, a nursery, near 73rd, in the area where several of the other greenhouses were. He was more of a regular jobbing gardener, but he was pretty good with Japanese garden design.

Japanese Gardens Popularized

Riess: When you put your display in, did it have a flavor of a Japanese garden?

Domoto: Most of the ones they put in were with the Oriental feeling, because the trees we used were like maples and rhododendrons and azaleas--the central form more than the flower, showy. We'd show whatever azalea happened to be in bloom, but more from the design.

Riess: That's interesting. In Pennsylvania, where I come from, you could plant maples and azaleas and it would just be straightforward foundation planting. You wouldn't think of it as a Japanese design. Yet here in California when I see those materials I instantly think of Japanese gardens. What gives a planting of azaleas and maples a Japanese quality?

Domoto: I think most of the Japanese gardens as such were the results of the different fairs, the expositions. And if people liked the idea, and the gardeners that they got would be the Japanese gardeners--.

In those days there were the Irish and Scotch gardeners, and they were more the big estate gardeners or foremen. In the smaller home gardens, the Japanese gardeners used to do some of the work. And if they were good, you know, someone would see their flair, and they'd decide they wanted a little fish pond. And then the fish pond got into a little larger material, into the larger gardens.

Riess: And, of course, a few very beautiful rocks.

Domoto: Well, see, the Japanese garden, the rock and trees and the water, they're all symbolic, and they have to be in proportion and shape. People who don't know, any big rock would be all right. But the rocks in Japanese gardens, each one has a different shape, and here they'd have to go out and try to find a rock, if they knew what they wanted. Some of them, I don't think they even knew what they really wanted.

I understand in Japan when a landscape man is putting in a garden he'll order a certain kind of a rock, and they'd be able to get that rock in a certain size. And they pay accordingly. I know my brother told me when he first started in New York and that area he had a hard time finding rocks. Finally, he found one Italian stone man to show him where to get it.

Riess: Well, I don't know exactly what I'm trying to conclude from all of this. But I think maybe people put together certain materials and think that they have made themselves a Japanese garden.

Domoto: No, I think a lot of the plants are going in just because they like the color at the time they buy it. Because, if that were the case, there would be a lot more Japanese gardens around. But like

azaleas, they make hedges. From the indoor azaleas, the ones that used to be forced for Christmas or Easter, the florist plant, well, in those days, if the person had any garden at all, or gardener, after they were through flowering in the house they'd plant it out in the garden.

I guess it was really the 1915 Fair when the big rhododendrons, the 'Pink Pearl' and those varieties were shown. Then after the Fair I think most of the plants went out to the Golden Gate Park; McLaren planted them out there. That was kind of the beginning of the rhododendrons in Golden Gate Park, in quantity.

And at one time the main office building [Golden Gate Park], right around the front of it, used to be a big bed of Hinodegiri azaleas--it's called 'Sunrise,' but Hinodegiri azaleas--that used to make a splash in the spring. As you drove into the park there off of the Panhandle, the administration building, around the office, had a big bed of those. That was one of the first of the Japanese azaleas in quantity that would make a show.

Later--this is much more recent--the one they call Hino Crimson took over, because Hinodegiri was a real hard pink.

Riess: And people found that it didn't work so well?

Domoto: Well, as far as growing it, it was good and hardy. It made a big splash of color. But as far as fitting in with anything else, it was hard to match the color. But I don't think people cared too much, as long as they got the splash of color. At that time Lakeside Park [Lake Merritt, Oakland], there's a big bed they planted in there, too. Those came from--I think that was from some that my father imported.

Riess: You didn't continue to specialize in azaleas, though?

Domoto: No.

Riess: Why not?

Domoto: Oh, there were too many other things to do.

Riess: Because they're always grouped together in people's minds, camellias, rhododendrons, and azaleas.

Domoto: Yes. Later I got into some of the azaleas, but I wasn't doing too much propagating. Mostly I was buying plants already grown for sale. I'd buy Hinodegiris, those hardy ones, from up north, Washington or Oregon. It was too hard to--my water wasn't quite

right for azaleas, and I'd have to buy--peat moss was cheap, but in order to get good propagation, I had to use that. So it was easier for me to buy what few azaleas I sold by buying the plants.

Riess: Why would you do it at all, then?

Domoto: To kind of round out some of the spring sales.

Riess: Are we talking about a time when people would be coming to the nursery?

Domoto: They'd probably come out just about the time they were in flower. The rest of the time, I'd not have much to see. It wasn't like a regular retail nursery. I have only put out one catalogue, and that was the last one I put out.

Riess: I would like to see that sometime.

Domoto: I'll have to look around and see where that one is. Some of the ones I gave to Filoli, catalogues, my dad's old catalogue.

Sunset Magazine

Riess: You said that you didn't advertise, and there was no publicity, but Sunset magazine and garden magazines, would they come and knock on your door? Like Walter Doty, did you know him?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: What kind of business would you have had with him?

Domoto: Oh, I think when they first moved to Menlo Park, I think I sold him a few plants for the garden. But Joe Williamson, he was one of the first--he wasn't the first, but he was one of the first garden editors there--I got to know him real well.

Riess: In that case, you would have been talking about what?

Domoto: Well, they asked me about different things for the articles that were being written, things like that.

Riess: When they were writing about camellias?

Domoto: Camellias, or any other type of Oriental plants. I'd give them the information, and they'd write it up.

See, Sunset never liked to give credit to the authors. It was all "Sunset magazine." Or, "editorial staff." If you notice. Maybe they've changed now, but like where all the other magazines would say, "This article by So-and-so," it was always "Sunset garden staff." And that's been the policy all the way through.

Riess: And did you write some of the articles?

Domoto: I never--no. Even if you wrote it, in most cases they would rewrite it.

Riess: I wonder what the point of that was.

Domoto: Oh, they were selling Sunset magazine. They weren't trying to sell you. If you wanted advertising, you'd have to go into the advertising section. And I think that that was a good deal, because they can get articles, and--. I don't know about the regular--the editors, they probably paid them for the information they got, or the articles they got. But look at the old ones, it's "Garden Editor," and "Staff."

Riess: No bylines.

Domoto: No byline, right. No write-up of the author. In these magazines [looking at bonsai magazines] you have "by Somebody," or "translated by Somebody." You don't see that in Sunset.

Riess: What is your general feeling about Sunset magazine? People tend to love it or hate it. What do you think it's done for the nursery trade?

Domoto: Oh, it's gone through all the different phases of publication. At first it was, in my idea, it was a good garden magazine, home magazine, a homemaker's garden guide. For California gardeners, especially the Bay Area, the articles. Then they got so they started advertising for southern California and up into Oregon. There was a reporter that used to be in this area; then she moved up to Seattle. Then, much later, they started a section in for more national publication.

Riess: Do you think that it's lost its importance for gardeners?

Domoto: It's informational. Not just for garden, I'd say for Western living. And that's what they got to more and more, the travel part and Western living. The garden section just became a minor part of it.

Riess: I was thinking that after the California Horticultural Society started, and azalea groups and camellia groups and rose groups,

that the people who were very serious gardeners would have outgrown Sunset magazine.

Domoto: Yes. Except the societies, their publications would be dedicated more to the subject they were a forum for, whereas Sunset would have more of a general appeal. But periodically, seasonally, they would have things that were apropos to that season, in order to sell the magazine.

Riess: If you had a new camellia variety, and it was written about in Sunset magazine, you would know, wouldn't you, by sales?

Domoto: Yes. You would get some reaction from it.

Riess: And in that way, it was good to have Sunset interested?

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Domoto: Unless there was a camellia show that was really outstanding, there would not be too much of an article on it, except to say that Berkeley or Sacramento was having a camellia show. They have a calendar of those garden things coming along.

Riess: That's true. But if there's a new double-flowered, super-hardy, drought-resistant, beautiful, fantastic azalea, they'll have a whole article about it.

Domoto: Yes. But they wouldn't be bringing it out first. First it would be probably shown at a flower show, or at some special show. It would interest just the group. Then they would write it up if it would be something that would be of value to the magazine. That's the way I felt, that they were doing the public a service, but at the same time, they had to serve a purpose for Sunset. Otherwise, they wouldn't do it.

In that respect, I think the Lanes, the original owners, they were more--. Doty was the editor-in-chief and it's gone through different changes, and now it's an entirely different magazine. The Lanes are no longer in there. So the whole feeling of the magazine has changed. It got bigger and thicker, and there are pictures, but it's more diversified. In fact, I guess they have a southern California edition, and Bay Area, and I think they have a northern one. I think they also have a section that has the middle western articles.

Riess: This is sort of out of left field, but do you think that they were helpful to the Asian population? Was there any way in which Sunset was helpful in issues of discrimination and persecution in California?

Domoto: I never felt that way about Sunset as far as any articles or anything like that, because if they were describing a plant they would describe it as such.

Riess: I mean, if you were to flip through the pages of Sunset magazine, would you have a feeling that anyone lived in California besides Caucasians?

Domoto: I think on the whole, the race side did not enter. It was more garden subjects or garden plants, or design as such. If they were describing a Japanese house, they would describe it, or Dutch Colonial. In other words, in that respect, but as far as race, I don't remember seeing any article that way.

Riess: It would be--and I'm thinking about Sunset back in the thirties--it would be whether or not the photographs included Japanese Americans in social situations.

Domoto: No, I don't think so. In fact, even your Western Travel and those things, I don't think that was brought in too much. I never paid much attention to magazines in those days. I should look at some of the old ones and see.

Riess: Well, it's something that I could look up, too. It just made me curious.

Domoto: No, I don't think so. I never felt that way. Some of the other magazines definitely were that way.

More on Backyard Gardeners: Tin Cans

Riess: Did you have any difficulties in getting materials because of prejudice or racial issues as you started to develop this nursery?

Domoto: I guess the different feelings that we had, through my father's period when we were importing--my dad was importing plants from Japan--I think there was a certain amount of prejudice about the plants he was bringing in, even though they would buy plants from him for resale. But as such, there was quite a bit of discrimination.

Then as the nursery industry progressed in California, the tin can gardeners. That really originated in southern California. That was mostly the Japanese gardeners going out, taking care of the gardens or yards, and they'd bring the cuttings or clippings home, and stick a bunch of cuttings in and have them grown in a

bunch of tin cans. So they were called tin can gardeners; they gave them that name there.

Riess: And other gardeners resented that?

Domoto: Especially in the other nurseries, they used to call them the tin can gardeners. Because tin cans were looked down on, snobbish, you know.

We started to talk about the article you had about the gardener in San Jose?

Riess: Yes.

Domoto: There again, the containers changed along with the nursery industry. Nursery Metal--we used to be able to get cans from some of the local canneries here, but later we weren't able to get them because Nursery Metal had the contract for all those cans. They buy egg cans. They used to be--I think it was a bake shop in Berkeley, they used to use a lot of egg cans.

Riess: Egg cans?

Domoto: Egg cans. They used to call them egg cans because the frozen eggs or whatever would come in those cans, and the bakery shop would empty them out. They had no labels on them, just plain. And that's about three-gallon size. They would be just plain, no paint on them. Except some of the ones that were filled with eggs, they got so that the label would be imprinted right into the cans, but that's more modern.

The other containers they called five-gallon, and those were mostly kerosene or oil containers, a by-product of the industry. But that's why nursery plant sizes used to be gallon cans, three-gallon cans, or egg cans, or five-gallon size. Then they got a little larger size, fifteen-gallon. Then you get into the drum size.

Riess: You were growing in the ground, but then you would transplant?

Domoto: No, most things that were sold in the ground, they were all like--we call balled and burlap. We would dig them and wrap them, tie them with the burlap, and put rope on them.

Riess: When did you use cans?

Domoto: I didn't use many big cans. The smaller camellias, I would sell some in the containers, because that was the only way the retail nurseries would buy them.

Riess: I don't think I've asked my question clearly, and I should ask again. Were there any people from whom you could not buy things, because they were choosing not to sell to Japanese, or business deals in the 1930s that were unpleasant for that reason?

Domoto: No, as far as being unpleasant, no, I would say not. Because they were all businessmen. Outside of--. You knew that there were some who were anti, but except for one or two, and I used to think of them as being hypocrites--. If they had an article that they couldn't grow, they would buy it from them, or somebody else would buy it from them. And if they were out-and-out true anti-somebody, you wouldn't let your dollar sense overcome your real feeling. The old dollar sign.

Riess: When times are tough people are more likely to get unpleasant, so during the Depression?

Domoto: There were some instances I don't remember, that I've heard, where they would try to damage a person's property. But if you did that, you see, they'd be liable for damages.

Nursery Business. Northern and Southern California

Domoto: The difference in the nursery industry between the central and northern part of the state and in southern California, there were fewer really wholesale nurseries as such up here, because land was more expensive. In southern California, most of the medium-sized nurseries used to rent land under the power lines--I forget how wide they were--but where the power lines go across.

Those who grew under the lines would grow in containers [so they could move the material out of the way when they needed access to the power lines]. Their rent was very nominal, so they didn't have to buy land or pay a high rent like the central and northern California nurseries.

There were very few really wholesale nurseries growing general nursery stock in this area. Clarke was producing, but he was only actually producing specialty items. Leonard Coates was the other grower, in Santa Clara. But they were primarily at first in a small way going into native plants. Most of the other things they sold in containers which were all brought up from southern California, because general garden plants can be brought up from there for resale.

Riess: Leonard Coates is associated with native plants?

Domoto: He had a retail nursery that handled different things, but he was trying to introduce native plants.

Riess: Like what?

Domoto: Oh, ceanothus, and maybe some of the oaks, but most of the general varieties.

Riess: That's interesting. Is there a Japanese ceanothus?

Domoto: I don't know. There could be, because ceanothus is a rather wide group of plants.

As far as introduction of new varieties of plants, both Asian and European, I guess W. B. Clarke was more instrumental actually than anyone else in the horticultural line, both importing azaleas from England, different places, propagating.

Riess: How about the Petaluma area and north? That would be another good growing area, wouldn't it?

Domoto: That's much later. It's only really in recent years that that area became known.

Riess: It's strong now in rhododendrons, I think. At least, I see nurseries. Maybe it's not a big growing area.

Domoto: No. Most of them--they're small growers. The big rhododendron growers are still up in the north, in Oregon.

Flowering Quince. Forced Acacias

Riess: Another plant you were developing for the market in the thirties was flowering quince. Is that right?

Domoto: Yes, flowering quince, I raised some. I think as far as new varieties of quince, I think Clarke introduced more different types of quince to the trade than anybody. He had a strain that he grew that he called Superba strain, and that was very upright and sticky--the branches were horizontal. Most of the quinces I had were the results of the plants that I had imported from Japan.

Riess: Who is this? You're having a visitor.

[tape interruption]

Riess: It is interesting that we've been interrupted last week and this week by bonsai friends of yours.

Domoto: Yes. Well, they're the only ones that come in here. Otherwise, I don't have anybody coming without an appointment. Some of them I don't like to talk with, it just tires me out to talk with them.

Going back to the flower shows, the big shows back East, the difference in the style of the show, they would have big beds of tulip bulbs, and more a splash of color than into actual garden design. And I think the first show I saw that was really the garden design put into the show was the spring garden show that Howard Gilkey designed.

Out here, you know, acacias in the spring are great big trees. I think it was in Boston, or New York, one of the states [in their flower show] had a lot of acacias in tubs. The plants were probably six, seven feet high, and they'd have them in flower and bring them in to the flower show. And that was the feature of that show. Pretty, but it didn't impress me, because I'd seen acres of acacias around here when California was already growing a lot more, shipping. But the cut flower acacia shipping was done more by going out to the private homes and buying the flowers for shipping.

Riess: Just cutting?

Domoto: Cutting the branches, or sprays, for shipping back East. I think the first one that started growing commercially so they wouldn't have to go chasing around for them was McLellan in Colma. Where the greenhouses are now I think they had a planting there so they wouldn't have to depend on the peddlers to go out and cut the acacias and bring them in, because you could never tell what they were bringing in.

Riess: I don't know how they could ship them and know that they would really bloom.

Domoto: Well, of course, they'd go by express. They'd cut them probably a week before they finally got--they never got real fuzzy, a lot of times they'd be just in a tight ball, and they'd show them that way. Occasionally, if the shipment came through well and they'd put it in the water, it'd sort of take up water and it would open up and get a real soft ball.

But that's why when they showed these trees at the flower show where they were growing and flowering, they really made a splash. Took the front stage, and the rest of the show was secondary.

Riess: I remember when my mother-in-law first visited us in California she was so thrilled with acacia out here, because of just what you're saying, that they were so precious there.

Domoto: I've told you, I think, that one of my most vivid memories was coming back in the spring, in February, coming over the Sierras early in the morning, waking up north of Sacramento, that area where there were big blocks of acacias just full of golden bloom. Back in the East it was snow and dirt and soot, and then to wake up in the morning and see that! Gee, it really felt good.

Riess: You didn't make that trip again, all the way to the East Coast?

Domoto: Just once. Mostly that was to and from going to school.

Riess: Did you enjoy the fall color? The color of the maples of the East Coast?

Domoto: I missed most of the fall colors because, you know, Urbana, Illinois is not far enough north and not far enough south. We'd get snow, the snow would melt, and get slushy, but we were never able to really enjoy the snow. I think in the two years there, two and a half years, I only went on one sleigh ride, and that was awful slushy.

I've seen some of the trees around the east of Illinois, towards Danville, along the Wabash River. I think it must have been the oak--the most colorful was the poison oak, ivy. I didn't know it was poison ivy until--I'm lucky it didn't affect me.

Patents. Camellias

Riess: You were saying that you developed a different strain of flowering quince.

Domoto: The couple I had were the semi-dwarf form I call them. I called the double white one 'Snow' and the other 'Cardinal.' In fact, I think I even took a couple of patents out on those two. [laughs]

Riess: How does that work, taking out a patent on a flower? What do you do? Where do you go first?

Domoto: You have to get a picture made, and then a regular description, and then you apply to the Patent Office for papers.

Riess: To the regular Patent Office?

Domoto: Yes, and they have a whole series of plants. And actually, the plant patent as such is more or less more like a copyright, actually.

Riess: Have you profited from that?

Domoto: I don't know. Now some companies do, because it's a form of advertising. But unless you have something that's going to really sell, by the time you pay the patent attorney and the fees and getting the photographs made for proper size for applying, I don't think it pays.

The All-American rose group, they patent those, because that's a group of large growers, mostly. And the others are people interested in rose growing. They watch the growers to see that nobody is infringing on their propagation rights. If somebody does, they report, and there are several cases where they prosecuted for infringement of the property. But unless you're able to watch it and prove it, you have a great cost and the return on it is very small.

Riess: Where could I get double red and double white flowering quinces?

Domoto: I don't know where you'd find any now. Nobody's propagating. The same as the old varieties that Clarke developed. I think Strybing Arboretum, they were trying to get someone to get more or less a group together. Ed Carmen might have gotten to know where some of them are. But you see, styles change, and demand changes in the garden industry. And when demand for the tall sticky showy spring flowers dropped off, nobody propagated.

Even in those days I think Clarke was the only one that was propagating, and there was enough of a demand for what he was growing, but if anybody else wanted to go into it, there wouldn't be enough demand for it.

Riess: How about any of your camellias? Did you patent them?

Domoto: 'Shiro Chan' is the only one I remember.

Riess: When I buy a camellia that says, 'pendulata Domoto--'

Domoto: It was something that I probably named, or that I originated, but after the quinces, I don't think I went to doing any more patents. For what you'd get back on it, it wasn't worth it.

Riess: You were also developing in the thirties the camellia reticulata 'Captain Rawes' from Hillier and Sons in England. You were trying to graft them?

Domoto: Yes. That was during the war, and by the time I got to the point where I was selling them, it was past the period of their demand. The reticulata varieties--since then there have been new hybrids being made, but I never got into the reticulata real heavy.

Riess: Why was it not popular?

Domoto: It's a big flower, and it's a rangy-looking plant. You really don't get the full impact of those varieties until the plant gets good-sized, in order to make any show.

Riess: Was there a problem with the graft?

Domoto: No, it was more the scarcity of propagating material, and then the fact that it takes so long to make that a really showy plant to sell. So that outside of the collectors that [like to] say, "Well, I've got a reticulata camellia," that like to boast about the plants, but not the shrub, there was little demand. So it never went over.

Riess: Did you do any original kind of grafting? Did you find new means of grafting? Were you experimenting all the time?

Domoto: Oh, yes. As far as propagating, I didn't have to do much that way.

Boyce Thompson Institute, and Keeping Current in the Profession

Domoto: Boyce Thompson Institute back East had more of a scientific experiment for using the solution for propagating, so all I had to do was get the solution and experiment with the best doses to use for the propagating.

Riess: And where are they?

Domoto: I think they're in--I think that's connected with the--Yonkers, New York, or if not, they're connected with the Massachusetts, Arnold Arboretum. It's a funded institute that subsidizes these different people who write articles, or do the experimental work there.

I think she was doing some work with the chemicals and then she got into--

Riess: Who is she?

- Domoto: I guess she was a graduate student there writing an article. I think she got a doctorate there and wrote articles on chemicals, and also did quite a bit of research with tree peony seeds.
- Riess: That leads to another question. You had an academic background in floriculture. Did you continue to belong to organizations and subscribe to scientific journals? Is that how you stayed in touch?
- Domoto: Most of that side of it, excerpts would come out in some of the nursery magazines. But as far as experimenting, they weren't generally useful pertaining to the things that I was trying to grow. So I had to do my own experimenting.
- Riess: Is there a journal of experimental floriculture or something like that?
- Domoto: No, the few that were, they were probably more or less into the, not into the horticulture line, they were more or less either agriculture-wise or you'd have to pick up articles or try to find someone who's working on it, and you'd find out from them. Horticulture-wise, there wasn't too much.
- Actually, horticulture-wise, except for the seed industry--that's a big industry--and the rose growers, of course, they had their own hybridizers. And a few of the fruit tree growers. But those were probably the three. Then you had your Gladiolus Society. Then for a while there the African Violet Society was very active. But I think now, the flowers that the growers like Burpee and those other seed companies, Ferry-Morse and those, we don't hear about, because they're not the retail seller, they're just either growers or contract growers for these companies that package their seeds and sell.
- Riess: I was wondering how you stay in touch with developments in your profession?
- Domoto: Well, as far as those things, nursery magazines, and there used to be florist magazines, and there still is a nursery magazine, and you'd see what they were doing mostly in the articles in there from time to time.
- Riess: Perhaps articles about grafting?
- Domoto: No, as far as the technical side of it, in these popular magazines there isn't too much in there. You probably get more from the plant propagators group.
- Riess: Oh, is there a group?

Domoto: There was. I don't know now.

Riess: And they would meet locally?

Domoto: Nationally. And they'd have someone, probably several of them, delivering papers on the certain types of things they were doing, just like any of these seminars that you have in college.

Gerberas, and Some Thoughts on Changing Lifestyle

Riess: When were you working with the double-flowered gerberas? The article about you from the Cal Hort Journal says that in 1941 you imported the seed from India? And then again in the 1960s you were working on them?

Domoto: Some of the seeds were from India.

Riess: Why did you choose gerberas?

Domoto: [pauses] You know, after talking with Jerry Shibata yesterday, I kind of thought over, "What have I been interested in?" I have gone with one crop and then another, I have changed.

The period of the gerberas, this lady from Encinitis came up with a bunch of real nice gerberas and showed it at one of the flower shows. A big bowl of them. And [I was interested because] at that time we were supplying Podesta Baldocchi in San Francisco with anything different for the flower show. Soon after that there was a lady over in Santa Rosa that was growing a few up there. Before that, I guess two brothers in San Jose were trying to grow them, but that were not different from the ones from Encinitis.

So I decided to try to get some plants, and I found out it was hard to get seed, to buy seeds of any kind. And once you got the seeds it was just a single flowering plant. But that [growing gerberas] was just a minor, minor part of the program.

Riess: How did you know to get seeds from India?

Domoto: I think at that time there was a seed firm, they were sending out a catalogue, and they were supposed to have some really good hybrid seeds. I used to get catalogues from all over, from England. And some [plants] I would hear about at the Hort Society, and if it looked interesting I would always try to get

some seeds. But that was not the main part of what I was doing. If it was, I would have starved.

Riess: You must have had some good strains going, because it is noted here as one of your accomplishments.

Domoto: I never got into selling the plants, because I was growing them mostly for the flower. No big quantity, I was kind of limiting my sale to Podesta, because they would take whatever I was able to cut. And then after the war I didn't have time for it. And I didn't have the plants left over.

Also, the trend had changed, the demand for it. Originally when I started the place I was in camellias, strictly camellias, and then camellias and azaleas. And then from azaleas, along about that time the bigger, larger ornamental plants that my dad used to handle, they came into demand, the maples and the flowering crab-apples. Now, of course, I am heavily into the bonsai, but that was kind of a side hobby I had, just fooling around with it in a way.

Changing times.

Riess: Fuchsias?

Domoto: Fuchsias I never got into too much. By that time there were special fuchsia growers, several around the Bay Area here. They were into it heavy, so in my retail side if I wanted some fuchsia baskets I'd buy a few baskets. But I never really got into that. My dad used to handle them, so I knew what they were. But I never got into it. Even orchids, I never got into it. We did have a few orchids at my father's place.

Riess: He had an orchid house?

Domoto: One of the small greenhouses. I still have a few orchids around here. The ones I have are from back bulbs that my landscape man used to bring me when he had transplanted the plants on some of the estates of the people he had been working for.

Gerberas are still popular, but now you see them in little florists four-inch pots. Sunnyside Nursery is calling them Hapi-Pots, something like that. They grow about six inches high, and the flowers are not very big, about three or four inches, but you get a lot of flowers on that. That's a variety that was developed in Germany. Sunnyside--Heichi Yoshida, the older member of that family now, the second generation, he goes all over, and when he sees anything different he brings it in.

For a while African violets, Saintpaulia were quite popular. They used to have African Violet Society people. But they were kind of big, big-leaf, and very touchy to handle. Then I think Heichi either was in Germany or England and found them growing real small, and so he bought them in, and grew them, that one variety. He was one of the first.

Riess: There certainly is a big market for little potted plants, roses, violets, mums.

Domoto: It's changing lifestyle. People don't have the big room, the houses. The days of the big Boston ferns--you used to have a Boston fern in the house; no more. Even the small ferns. And the ones that do get [into] it, they don't have the time to put in. They want something that will last a little while, or they will buy it for just two or three weeks, and instead of planting it in the garden afterward, mostly it goes into the garbage.

Riess: I probably think that if a plant is in soil it has endless potential. But that's sort of silly, to feel committed to make the plant live a "full" life.

Domoto: The newer generation doesn't think that way. And they don't have the space or the time. Once in a while you get someone who does have the time.

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Riess: Incidentally, is Podesta Baldocchi still run by the same family?

Domoto: Could be a relation, but when Eddie Goepner sold out his share, from then on it started to go down. Then Ah Sam in San Mateo, Mabel, more or less gradually has taken over some of the jobs for the Peninsula crowd where Podesta couldn't go down to take care of it. Eddie was forced out--I guess the other members of the group there, not the first generation, but the next generation, they had differences of ideas--and he sold his share. Then that's when he retired up north, to St. Helena or Healdsburg, somewhere up there.

The "Experts." and the Case of the Camellia Petal Blight

Riess: Just one more question, and I'm going to check out for the day. From the beginning, from the 1920s when you were established here, did you call upon the agricultural extension people or the UC Extension for services?

Domoto: There wasn't too much, except once in a while I would run into difficulty with an insect or disease or something, and then I'd get help, or the county would send a specialist in for identification. I think he was named Butterfield--I don't know whether he was a full professor or not, but we used to call him Professor Butterfield. He was in Agricultural Extension at UC Berkeley. He was very active in the early Alameda County Horticultural Society, and he liked plants and he got to know them really well. He was an active member of the Strybing Arboretum Society.

Riess: It was easy when you had a problem to call on somebody and get help?

Domoto: If you knew what the problem was.

Riess: [laughs] They would come to you, or did you have to take a leaf to somebody else?

Domoto: Well, no. Most of the times they were either county or state service, they were connected with the county agricultural commissioner or also with the state. I'd submit it to the local people, and they in turn would keep passing it on up above. So I got to know some of the professors, like Butterfield and Dr. [Robert] Raabe.

Riess: Did you have any exotic diseases here?

Domoto: Oh, yes. Things that were supposed to have been quarantined--they accused me of bringing in the camellia petal blight from the Orient.

Riess: You didn't do that!

Domoto: I'm almost certain I didn't. But anyway, they found it in most quantity in my nursery first.

Riess: You were still bringing in material for propagating?

Domoto: I had brought some plants in from Japan, new varieties. Before it originated in my nursery, at least maybe five, six hundred yards away in another lath house, the old lath house--. I still think that the camellia petal blight is a form of the apricot brown rot. The petals, the flowers, get rotten. I could never prove it, but where the petal blight first started in my lath house was right next to an apricot orchard.

The year when we had a really bad season of apricot brown rot, there in even the few trees I had around my place, that was

where the blight showed up in the flowers. And in another section, maybe a block, block and a half away, was where I had the new plants from Japan, they were small plants, so they had flowers, but just a few. I couldn't see how the disease could have come in unless in the bud itself. Well, I never argued with them.

In fact, some of the other things as to horticulture, the variation on the flowers, the foliage, Gordon Lang, who was the agriculture commissioner at the time, came out. And I forgot who, Middlebrooks, and one other, they were both with the state, and they came out. We had camellia plants that had the variegated foliage, and they were trying to say that when the variegation grows one way it's a virus, and with variegation another way, it's not a virus, it's a natural thing.

I guess maybe now with the newer, more high-powered microscopes, they could probably trace that out. In those days, that was before that. So in the greenhouse, they almost got into a fight. And the agricultural commissioner had to kind of tone it down. [laughter] We had two blocks of plants there, gallon cans of foliage. We had them separated. And one of them would show up on the new foliage, and the other, the variegation wouldn't show up on the new foliage. So they were trying to say, "If the variegation is this way, it's a virus, the other, it's natural."

X CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF NURSERYMEN

Some Thoughts on Trust

[Session 5: August 19, 1992] ##

Riess: What age is Mr. Derr [a Chinese-American friend of Mr. Domoto's who was visiting when interviewer arrived]?

Domoto: He's still actively working so he must be in his sixties yet. He has two children that have already graduated, and another one still in high school. His wife is Cantonese. She likes orchids and things, and they like to come and talk about plants.

Riess: You mentioned his experience of discrimination. Was that in his generation, or in his father's generation?

Domoto: Both his father's and his generation, because his father just passed away here about two years ago. He still has a mother living in Oakland. But see, the discrimination of the Chinese, especially if you're living in Chinatown, it's different from if they were in agriculture. Even with the Japanese, the same way. When they are living in the cities, in apartments or that--

Riess: They are in a completely Chinese surrounding. Where does the discrimination occur? In the schools?

Domoto: In the schools, I guess, and whatever--I think he said his father used to run a grocery store, too, a Chinese grocery store. And in the schools there was probably some.

Riess: Is he bitter about it?

Domoto: No. It was that way, and so we didn't expect anything better.

Riess: That's the way you feel?

Domoto: At times, why, you feel a little bitter, especially if someone that you thought was a friend, you find out they weren't. Your trust in some people disappears. But you get to the point where you just take them as they are. If you like them, all right, and if they're good, you cultivate them. You can be cold, or you can be warm to them.

Riess: Do you try to change people?

Domoto: No, I change myself to adapt to them. I don't try to change anybody. It's not my job if they don't know what to do to adjust themselves to the surroundings. I'm not a preacher or a teacher. If they asked about plants, certain things I know, I'll tell them. But some of them, they ask questions just to be asking. Like in high school you get in a classroom where someone wants to make a good impression, they keep asking the teacher a lot of questions, just to be asking questions. You can size people up pretty fast that way.

Riess: That happens with people coming to ask about bonsai?

Domoto: Yes, bonsai and that. Some of them just to be asking questions. And others are starting in, but very shallow, and unless they do their homework, I don't feel I have to.

Riess: You don't want to do all the work for them.

Domoto: No.

Association Opens Membership, 1929

Riess: I just read a write-up about you when you received the California Association of Nurserymen award at a meeting in Yosemite in 1970. It says in the article that you joined the Nurserymen Association in 1929, and that you were the first Japanese American to do so.

Domoto: No, there were two of us initiated into the California Association in 1929. The other man was Japanese, Japanese-born. He was a little older.

Riess: What was his name?

Domoto: His name was Uye Matsu, Star Nursery in Montebello.

Riess: You joined the California Association of Nurserymen. That was a practical decision? You could not have gotten ahead in the business unless you joined?

Domoto: No. To me, it was probably--they thought it was an honor. It was an honor in the way of being the first Japanese to become a member. The other is, well, so be it. That is, I didn't feel I was getting any more benefits from it, just one step in towards where the discrimination was gradually melting down.

Riess: Was there an actual application to join?

Domoto: No. It wasn't an application, it was their--. W. B. Clarke of San Jose, the nurseryman, he said it was about time they took in some of the other nurserymen in California, instead of being all white. So he was instrumental in getting us into the association.

Riess: He approached you and Mr. Matsu?

Domoto: Yes, more or less asked us to come to, I think it was Fresno, for the initiation. But it was actually an opening up of the association to all the nurserymen.

Riess: Who else did that mean? Did that mean any black nurserymen?

Domoto: Oh, there were very few. Even now, I don't think there are many black nurserymen, except in the Deep South. Around here, I don't know of any that are true all black.

Riess: How about Mexicans? Were there any Mexicans?

Domoto: No. They're much later. There are some, probably, but they're in the next decade.

Riess: So when W. B. Clarke said, "We need some other nurserymen," the only "other" nurserymen were Japanese Americans.

Domoto: Mostly, yes.

Riess: Then did there continue to be new Japanese-American members added?

Domoto: Not too many others that joined, because in southern California, the nursery group, they have their own Japanese group.

Riess: Oh, that was separate?

Domoto: It's separate. So one or two members of those probably decided to go to some of the California Association meetings, but very few of

them did. Because of partly language difficulties, and social-wise, outside the meeting there wasn't much.

Activities

Domoto: Later, they started to give the refresher courses, much later. It would be way into the forties, I guess. They were there a four-day session, and Nurserymen Association members would attend, and florists and people in retail, in garden centers--that name probably originated with Ernest Wertheim.

Riess: You attended?

Domoto: Yes. And most of the Japanese Americans. The students then that came were second-generation.

Riess: Where were the refresher courses?

Domoto: At different places.

Riess: Was it run by UC Extension?

Domoto: I guess it was more or less Extension, in combination with the California Association of Nurserymen. They worked with them, and they would have them one year in San Luis Obispo, and they met in Sacramento some years. It's kind of moved around.

Riess: Just members of the California Association of Nurserymen, or could anyone come?

Domoto: The California Association of Nurserymen would arrange the program. There were some sessions, of course, that were business, and so unless you were a member you wouldn't be able to attend. A lot of it was more or less educational, lectures, on insecticides, propagations, economics, and anybody in the nursery business could attend, if there was room.

Riess: Did you get involved at the business end? Were you an active member in that way?

Central California Association

Domoto: Yes. See, I was part of this--when it first started, we used to have a Central California Nurserymen's Association. That was just in the Bay Area here. We were quite active in a small way. We never tried to be big, but in a small way we were quite active.

During one part of the Depression, when the southern California group--they were mostly all larger firms--in the Depression time, when the California Association was having hard times, actually it was the Central California that kept the association going. They won't admit it, but I know it, being I was secretary for a while, and then I was president. That was a time when Charlie Burr, who was a nurseryman at California Nursery, in Niles, and then later he and another man named McDonnell, the secretary, between McDonnell and myself, we used to do a lot of work there.

Riess: Isn't Charlie Burr a Peninsula nurseryman?

Domoto: That was later. Before he went to the Peninsula both he and McDonnell were working at the California Nursery in Niles, for the California Nursery Company, as salesmen.

Riess: When did you join the Central California group?

Domoto: Quite early.

Riess: Before you had your own nursery? Before you went to school?

Domoto: No, it was after I had started a nursery here.

Riess: So 1927, maybe.

Domoto: No, it would probably be in the thirties, I guess.

Riess: You joined the California Association in 1929.

Domoto: Twenty-nine? Then it must have been the early twenties when the Central California Association was active. And it was just more or less a small group. We were a small group, but quite active. The membership used to be pretty good in attendance. Once a month we'd meet places around the Bay, so that it would be convenient for nurserymen in different areas to come at least once in a while.

Riess: How long were you the only Japanese in the Central California group? You and Mr. Matsu.

Domoto: While I was active, they may have had [Japanese-American] members of the Central, but very few of them came to the meetings. And Uye Matsu was in southern California, and actually, that meeting when we were initiated, I guess that was more or less--as far as Mr. Matsu was concerned, I don't think he ever came to any other meeting, unless out of social, in respect.

Riess: Yes. Well, you probably were very different men, don't you think?

Domoto: Yes. Besides my being able to talk the language, and having grown up in the nursery, I had things more in common with the group.

Nakashima Nursery

Riess: Did you read about the tragedy at the Nakashima Nursery in Watsonville? [shooting of some employees]

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Is that an old family?

Domoto: Yes. They had a rose-growing nursery in San Leandro, between San Leandro and Bayfair area, about 140th Avenue. I think there were three or four brothers, I'm not sure. And then one of the oldest brothers went to southern California, I guess towards Brawley somewhere, to raise roses. The next brother opened an appliance store in San Leandro, and the youngest one, when they sold the property here in San Leandro, started this place in Watsonville.

When I first heard it over the radio I thought, "Oh, gee, it must have been the older brother." Because knowing the personality of the three, he'd be more likely to get an angry employee. That was my impression right away. Then, later, when I heard it was this one in Watsonville I said, "He's the nicest one of the three." Personality-wise.

Actually, from the reports on the TV, or radio, all I know is that he wasn't even an employee that went on the rampage, that he'd been in an accident with this Nakashima's daughter, a car accident, and they said that he was disgruntled over the settlement.

Riess: Does this kind of thing still send a shock wave, as they say, through the Japanese-American community, when something like that happens?

Domoto: I think it does, not only the Japanese, but right now it's almost national in happening. It's the difference in the public attitude towards certain things. Of course, it hits the Japanese, because we happen to know them, and it's a smaller community, but overall, it's like that shooting at McDonald's in southern California? And then the things that have happened in some of the restaurants in the different areas. So it's not uncommon.

Riess: The shock wave is not the racial shock wave, it's the violence.

Domoto: It's the violence, yes. In this case here, I think there were two employees of Nakashima's that were killed, too. The fellow that did it, he was either an ex-Vietnam veteran or something. And those people, you know, if their mind goes that way you can't blame them, because they're used to shooting. Taking a life doesn't mean anything. In the army training, "that guy's your enemy." It doesn't make any difference--if it's your enemy you shoot him. I think that's what comes up.

Riess: I think so, too.

You say that there was an association of Japanese nurserymen in southern California. Was there any consideration of grouping the Japanese nurserymen up here in a separate association?

Domoto: Up here, I don't think. They had one association I think of the bedding plant growers up here in the Bay Area, East Bay area. But I think that was not just Japanese, it was more or less a group association, because they were both Japanese and white growers in that group. But that was more by what they were growing rather than--the products rather than by race.

The Social Side

Riess: When you became a member of the Central California group and the California Association of Nurserymen, did that mean a different kind of social life for you personally?

Domoto: There was very little social side. About the only social part would probably be--oh, if you had like the annual picnic, or at the monthly meetings you would have a little discussion before you started, sat down and ate, and then the meeting, and that was it. But as far as socially, very little intermingling that way.

In fact, for several years, even in the California Association, at their convention, I would go and I had certain

friends that I would go with, who would chum around between sessions. Like conventions, you always have certain groups that you have your parties in your room or otherwise, but I was never invited to those. But I didn't care, because I didn't drink.
[laughter]

American Association of Nurserymen

Riess: Is there also then a national association that you belong to?

Domoto: Yes. There was the American Association of Nurserymen.

Riess: And when did you become a member of that?

Domoto: I don't know.

Riess: Were you a first of any sort in the American Association?

Domoto: I don't think so. I think when the American Association came out to California, I think that was when I joined.

Riess: You mean for a national meeting in California?

Domoto: Yes, national meeting. I got to know the secretary, I think it was Dick White. He was the first national secretary for them, and he was quite active in trying to get membership for the American Association.

Italian Families, and Others, in Cut Flower Business

Riess: Out here, the nursery profession has been largely dominated by Italian families, hasn't it?

Domoto: No, the Italian families were actually mostly in the cut flower side. There were not too many Italians in the nursery per se.

See, the flower market side, the early days of the flower market or flower business in San Francisco, the Italian growers were mostly ones that grew the outside flowers like marigolds, calendulas, stock, and the field flowers, and at that time violets. Violets used to be one of the main crops. Lilacs and asparagus fern. Until the Flower Market was formed they used to

sell even on the streets, or where the market was, just like in those days the Japanese did, the early ones.

Then when the Japanese group had their Flower Market, and I think when they moved to Fifth Street, I think that's when they had the two markets together. They used to be called the Italian market and the Japanese market. And then also the Chinese market.

Riess: What did the Chinese specialize in?

Domoto: Mostly in pompom chrysanthemums.

Riess: And where were the fields? The Italians were down around Half Moon Bay?

Domoto: No. Italians were mostly in the Colma area.

Most of the field crops, a lot of them were grown by the women, because they had their truck gardens down there, and the women would grow a few flowers to take to the cemetery. At least that is the history as I know it. And then, of course, it got so that around Memorial Day, and so forth, they would get more for their flowers than they did for their fruit, for the vegetables. So gradually the vegetable side went, and they got more and more into the field crops.

The other thing that they used to raise, the Italian growers, were violets. Those were the days when they used to make little bunches of violets, with a bunch of leaves on the outside for the women to wear as corsages. I don't know if you remember those or not, the street peddlers used to sell them.

Riess: That's a lot of work, a lot of violets.

Domoto: Yes. The violets were hand-picked, and they'd put the rosette of leaves outside, and they'd have to try to sell them the first day, because after the second day, the fragrance is gone. The flowers are there, but the fragrance is gone.

Riess: You've been interested in the history?

Domoto: Well, partly because now they are writing the history of the California Flower Market. Those were things that I grew up with, and then I remember how they were growing, what they were doing. Gradually the Italian growers had the greenhouses where they were growing the asparagus ferns and maidenhair fern for the flower markets.

As far as pot plants in those days around the Bay Area, in the quantity, there was Plath and Sons in Colma. They were German. They were good growers. And in the East Bay side, near my father's place, was James Nursery. He was English, and he was a very good plant grower.

Riess: Well, there was probably a lot that nurserymen could learn from each other about potting materials or bedding materials.

Domoto: I think actually the bedding plant growers were the first ones that started to go together, ordering, buying flats and fertilizer and things. I think they were about the first to organize that way.

Most of the other nurseries, pot plant growers, a few of the pot plant growers, probably about the only time [they would get together on something] was around the holidays. Christmas or Easter, they might decide on about how much to charge for poinsettias or cyclamen, their seasonal crops. Or Easter lilies, how much a bud they would charge. That was about the only time. It was very loose.

Bill Schmidt

Riess: I'm interested in your recollections of some of the early names in nursery history. William Schmidt. Was he an early nurseryman?

Domoto: Let's see. Just a question of what do you call early?

Riess: Well, I call early around 1930. Basically, what I'm pursuing is your contemporaries in those days.

Domoto: Yes. Bill Schmidt was a grower in Palo Alto, and got known more actively I guess at the Cal Hort meetings.

Riess: He wrote the article about you that was in the Cal Hort Journal.

Domoto: Yes. In fact, he wanted me to write [it]. I said, "No, I don't write." And then Bill said, "Can I come over and interview you?" I said, "Oh, we can talk if you want." So that's how [that article was written]. He wrote several articles for the Cal Hort Society, he was a good writer.

Riess: It's interesting how much attention has been paid to the historical aspects of the business. I think that the Cal Hort

Society has done a very good job of looking into its own background.

Domoto: I think a lot of it depends on who the members happen to be. If they were interested in the historical side of it, and if they were able to write, or able to talk to people, they would be the ones that do the writing. Bill Schmidt used to do quite a bit of writing [for the Central California Nurserymen's Association], both when the Central California Nursery group split, and when they formed the Peninsula group.

Riess: We've mentioned Charlie Burr. Did you see him mostly when you were at meetings?

Domoto: Mostly at the meetings, and then other times when he was selling for the California Nursery, nursery stock. Later, he was sort of a broker, plant broker, after he left the California Nursery.

Riess: What does that mean? How does that work?

Domoto: You represent several nurseries, go around to the other nurseries and take orders for the other growers.

Julius Nuccio

Riess: Who is Julius Nuccio?

Domoto: Oh, he's second-generation Italian in southern California. His nursery now is quite prominent in azaleas and camellias.

Riess: You had a business relationship with him?

Domoto: Real early. I guess it dates back to [pause]--well, he was just starting his nursery there. He'd just come back from serving in the war in '17. No, maybe War II. Yes, it must have been War II, because he served overseas, and at that time he just had a little nursery, just starting. When camellias were getting quite popular, he started in breeding camellias there with his brother.

Riess: Did you know him before the war?

Domoto: I knew of him during or right after the war through a friend that used to be an express messenger on the trains for the American Express Company, going to L.A. and back. He liked plants, and I knew him pretty well. And when he'd go to L.A., he'd go down to the flower markets there, and somehow he got to know the Nuccios.

So if he [Nuccio] had new varieties he'd find out and get the plants for me from them, or vice versa.

Riess: This was before you knew Mr. Nuccio himself.

Domoto: Yes, personally.

Riess: That's interesting. He had different varieties, too.

Domoto: Everybody was trying to get new varieties. And whenever we were friendly we'd swap actions with each other.

I think the reason we got along with Nuccio was because his family, I think he told me, used to live next to a Japanese either truck farmer or something, and as kids they used to go back and forth to eat, go over and eat Japanese food, and come over and eat "Dago food"--that's the way he used to say it. So he knew how to get along with the Japanese.

Even now he's well known as a camellia and azalea expert, but it's in the next generation, and his sons and nephews actually run the nursery now. But Julius is still active in the Camellia Society, and he's very active in getting new varieties of azaleas from Japan. He's still experimenting, getting new varieties, new species of camellias, and new species of azaleas.

Riess: Did he go to Japan?

Domoto: Yes. He traveled to Japan several times. Once he was going with one of the other Issei growers, but that man had a heart problem and so he didn't go, but Julius went anyway. The growers over there were expecting him.

Riess: Did he go to a particular area?

Domoto: No, people in all areas. They were growers in all areas.

Julius and Joe were the two brothers. Joe didn't go to the war, I think. Julius went to the war, worked in the defense, I guess, in the war. Their family history, I think, if you look in the American Camellia Society annual or something there's a history of the Nuccio family. It's quite complete there.

Riess: That's good to know. So for you, he was an easy person to be with.

Domoto: Well, personality-wise, he could get along with anybody. As far as groups, why, some of the ones that were discriminatory, he

said, "Ah, the hell with them." That was his attitude. "If they don't like me, okay."

Riess: But why would they not like him?

Domoto: Well, because he probably was an upstart. [laughter] Just starting a nursery business, and some of the older nurseries there kind of looked down on him.

Riess: Did you visit him in southern California? Did you do business down there?

Domoto: Whenever I went down there. When he started his nursery down there, when I used to go around to nurseries, there was another plant broker that kind of took me around, and I'd go to the Nuccios there.

His mother was a real good Italian cook, real hearty. And my wife and I happened to be down there one time, may have been dinnertime or lunch--I forgot which, must be dinner--and we were about to leave. "No," he said, "you stay and eat. No trouble at all." I still remember it. I think it was spaghetti, a big dish, in their home. They insisted we stay and eat. I still remember it, and my wife does too, as being one of the best Italian dinners we ever had. [laughs]

Riess: Julius understood how to deal with the Japanese growers? He knew the right manners?

Domoto: It's not so much manners. Manners is what you dress up with. It's more the customs that you know.

Riess: I'm thinking of the problem of the stereotypical heartiness of the Italians and the reserve of the Japanese.

Domoto: It could be a problem. But here it was more a matter of being on an equal status. At the Flower Market the Italians and Japanese were more or less on the same status. When you're a community you get to know each other more easily.

Flying Around

Riess: What time of year would you take time to go and go around with a plant broker?

Domoto: Mostly we'd try to go down when the camellia plants were in blossom, to get new varieties of camellias. It would be kind of an exchange.

Riess: But it would be hard for you to leave your nursery, wouldn't it?

Domoto: Oh, I'd go probably over the weekend or take a very short trip down and back. Most of the time, I'd fly down. Even in those days.

Riess: Out of Oakland?

Domoto: Mostly out of Oakland. And then he [Alfred Peterson] would just pick me up down there.

Riess: Did you like to fly? You must have liked to fly.

Domoto: It was much shorter than riding a train, and I guess it used to make me nervous, but I didn't mind.

Riess: And it wasn't very extravagant to fly?

Domoto: Well, from the point of view of time, I don't think it made too much difference.

My first flight was when I was in college, '24, '25. At that time, there were several of the ex-army guys that were in the graduate school in Illinois, and one fellow was a flyer. He had to go up to the air field there--I forgot the name--he'd have to go about once a month or so to fly to keep his status. He wanted company on the ride up, wanted to take us to see what it looked like. I said, "Sure."

We went up there. And then he said, "Do you want a ride?" "No." "Well, just sit in it and see what it feels like." And so I got in there, and the first thing I knew, he had turned the props over and I was in the air. [laughs] I had no way of getting out! I was scared at first, but I guess I kind of enjoyed it.

That was my first airplane ride. The second ride I think was to that convention in Fresno. They had an air flight from Alameda to Fresno. I took that and went [flew] down instead of driving down. They said, "How did you come down?" "By plane." [laughs]

Riess: That's a pretty classy entrance. It sort of says, "I'm such a busy person."

Domoto: No, it wasn't that. Just crazy! I don't think I ever thought much of time, because it was either the train or driving or bus, the way you traveled. To me, this was a chance to use the airplane.

Geneva's Nursery with Dick Plath

Riess: Speaking of great Italian food, I read about you going over to the Flower Market in the late twenties and thirties, and sitting down for spaghetti and macaroni.

Domoto: Yes. That was when I went with Dick Plath to Geneva Sunnyvale Nursery. They were one of the first big Italian growers. They had a big range down there near the Cow Palace. They really broke the pot plant business, as far as the smaller growers like my father and James and Hayashi's and Plath's. They were probably the first to make these mass mixed-plant pots, and that was because that was the second generation coming in, the third wave of immigrants, and they were bringing in Italian laborers to work in the greenhouse.

I remember that they used to have a big wine barrel where they could go and take a drink of vino whenever they wanted to, the help. But when the NRA started up, where they had to have minimum wage and minimum working hours, then they cut that out altogether. Before that, they used to have a big lunch for the whole bunch of them. A long table, and I don't know whether it was macaroni or spaghetti, but anyway, they used to have these big dish pans. They had them on a castor, and workers on both sides of the table, they would slide it down to each one to help themselves. When it was empty they'd go back and fill it up again.

Riess: That's great! You would eat with them sometimes?

Domoto: Well, certain ones we got very friendly with them, that's why we'd be over in the market there. Dick Plath was a second-generation German nurseryman. He was able to--he knew how to get along with people, everyone liked him. And he'd say, "Hey, Toich, let's go down and see what Geneva's growing for Easter," something like that. We'd go on down, nothing planned, just more or less impromptu meetings, things like that.

Dick Plath used to say that when the Japanese group entertained the Italian group, or the other way around, they would see how many of the directors would go under the table, because of

the ones who were not used to the Japanese sake or the Italian wine.

Riess: What was the name of the Geneva Sunnyvale Nursery family?

Domoto: The president of the company was Restani. I don't know the first part. Restani--I think they were brothers.

The flower group there, the Italian group, I think if you contact the secretary of the San Francisco Flower Growers Association--that's the Italian group--they would probably have the history of the group written up. Because there were several other families.

Riess: We can make a note of that in the oral history, and people can pursue some of those things.

Mixed Pots

Riess: What do you mean by their being the first to introduce "mixed pots"?

Domoto: Well, the pots would be planted with coleus, and primulas, maybe a fern, just assorted plants put together into a planter. They weren't made to last forever. You could use plants that weren't top grade or something and push them all together.

Whereas, most of the other earlier pot plants, you had to grow the poinsettias with a single stem--that's the only way we knew how to grow it--and try to keep all the leaves on it. Now, you can get them one plant, with a single root, three or four stalks coming off the same plant. In those days they were just one stem. And you had to try to keep it down from growing too tall.

And the mixed pots, they were smaller, and sometimes if they dropped their foliage, you could put the naked stem in there and cover it up with ferns and stuff.

Riess: Yes, that's very smart.

Domoto: First, I guess, that was the way it started. Then when it started to go over, they started to grow plants expressly for that. Jam a bunch of plants in and call them mixed pots. The average grower, he couldn't compete. He didn't have space nor the time to produce all that.

Riess: Don't you think also that this was a style that was coming from Italy?

Domoto: Yes, sure, changing times.

More on the Social Side: Drinking

Riess: You talk about eating spaghetti, did you and your wife entertain Julius Nuccio here?

Domoto: Oh, when Julius came up we'd try to go somewhere together. But generally when he'd come up he had his friends in San Francisco, and his wife had some friends, so it was--. We hardly ever went to restaurants--we had him eat at the house here.

Riess: Yes, that's what I mean.

Domoto: He and his wife would stop, and if it was at lunchtime we would sit and chew the rag. But as far as going out to dinner, no, because it would mean changing clothes and going out. We'd have pot luck and talk.

Riess: You've said a couple of times that when it comes to actually changing your clothes and going out, you'd rather not.

Domoto: I'm not a clothes horse.

Riess: Well, you don't like to go out so much?

Domoto: No, it's a matter--if it was just to go out and then try to come back and really want to work--. I like to eat, but otherwise, just to go out I'm not so interested.

Riess: And a lot of going out means drinking, and you don't drink?

Domoto: No.

Riess: Did your father not drink?

Domoto: He was a social drinker. And even then, not much. But I had an uncle that was an alcoholic. When I got to be able to drive, they would have the meetings in different places and I would have to be the chauffeur to take them, and bring them home from these meetings at the different growers' homes.

After the meeting part was over, Dad would say, "Let's go home," and I'd bring my dad home. And I'd have to go back and pick my uncle [Henry] up and bring him home. I'd put him to bed. My father--if he had even sake, little cups, or beer even, his face would get awful red. Circulation wasn't good. And so at home, like on New Year's, when they had the sake he'd ask for just cold tea. So he'd have tea to drink with them, but not the sake.

Riess: You were warned off by seeing all of that.

Domoto: Well, I guess partly. I knew the names of some of the more common liquors, and even the taste. But I never got into it. I guess partly because of taking care of my uncle. And then some of the other workmen would go out on a spree and come back dead drunk. It never appealed to me.

Riess: No, it's not a pretty sight.

Domoto: Especially if you have to kind of help them get into bed or something.

XI RELOCATION

Pearl Harbor

Riess: Who else from those days before the war did you feel close to? World War II broke everything up, in a way, and I'm interested in what kind of community you had established, what you had to come back to. You had what you thought was a good life, and the war came and really messed it up. When you come back did you find those people again that were your good friends before? I'm trying to figure out who the people were that you were leaving behind when you had to go off to camp.

Domoto: [pause] I don't know. Probably circumstance--I mentioned that before. After the war was declared--.

The day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor I happened to be sitting down with my bank manager, talking, when that happened. He said, "Toichi, I don't know. It looks bad. I'll do what I can, but I don't know." And that was this place here. Then the next thing I remember is someone from the sheriff's department asking me the names of the Japanese that were doing things for the Japanese government. I said, "I don't know." Because I never got into the Japanese Association Group, or that kind of thing.

Riess: You mean they came right here to the house to ask you?

Domoto: They sent a deputy out to ask me who they--but they had the names already of the members of the Flower Market or the Japanese groups around here, the older ones that used to belong to different clubs and so forth. Most of the more active members were picked up and sent to detention camps for the alien Japanese, so-called.

Riess: The ones that they thought were working for the Japanese government.

Domoto: Yes. Then later, several of them were released.

Riess: Were any of them among your friends?

Domoto: No. Most of those were people I knew, or the family knew, but since they were the older generation, as far as socializing I wasn't in there.

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Riess: When the sheriff or the deputy came, was he apologetic? How was he when he asked you?

Domoto: I don't even remember that. I know they asked if I knew anyone, and I said, "No, I don't know." Because I never really associated with the group that way. So their questions were very brief, and possibly that was because of the fact that I knew the sheriff.

Riess: He was someone you already knew.

Domoto: Yes. They had a pretty good list of the ones, so they could round them up right away in a hurry.

Riess: The couple of years before then, had there been undercurrents of concern that a war was building up with Japan?

Domoto: No, I don't think so. We knew that, in hearing the talk in the papers, the different groups--some of the folks that had families or other in Japan, they used to send relief packages just like we do now sending medicine, like the Red Cross, sending packages to the countries. Well, they were doing that; the different clubs would get together and send things. But outside of that, not too much.

Riess: Were you reading any Japanese community newspapers or anything?

Domoto: No. I couldn't read it. And the English section was very poor. And I had no interest that way.

Marriage to Alice Okamoto

Riess: I should go back a step. By that time, you were married, weren't you?

Domoto: Yes.



Toichi Domoto, and Alice Okamoto Domoto, married on August 31, 1940.
Photographed at home in Hayward, California.

Riess: How did you meet your wife?

Domoto: Oh, through my dad's friends.

Riess: Your wife lived in Oregon?

Domoto: No. They were in Guadalupe. She was born in Oregon, but she'd been living in Guadalupe.

Riess: Down near Santa Maria?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Why? Nursery business?

Domoto: No. He was a secretary for the--I think the vegetable group.

But it was partly through family friends of my dad's. They all thought I should be getting married, because I was getting up in age, and was going to be a bachelor.

Riess: Had you been looking?

Domoto: Not too much. I was a little bit, but you know, it was a big family. I was given my education, and the older ones [were too]. My dad's philosophy was, "We'll try to give all of you an equal education, as much as you want. After that, you're on your own." That was his philosophy. Surprisingly enough, when the firm went bankrupt, those of us that had gotten educations were already finished. But some of the younger ones weren't able to.

Also I guess it was part of the training from my mother. I felt that, as much as I could, I would help the younger ones get their education. I wasn't able to help much, but at least I was able to help them somewhat. Until they had gotten that, I felt I had an obligation to meet, family-wise. I never told anybody that way, but that's the feeling I got from my mother, and my dad. I know that that's what--.

So they thought I was an old freak and never going to get married. [laughs] Although I broached it with several. They'd bring someone around to meet, but I figured, well, as long as I'm feeling I'm not ready to get married because of my other obligations, I didn't feel like getting anything started at all.

And then, you know, if you're out in sort of an agricultural community, and not in the--. If you live in the city, like a business or something, or a shop, you're always dressed all the time, ready to go out. When you're out in the nursery, you're

like a farmer. If you want to go somewhere, you've got to change. Being lazy, I think--.

Riess: [laughs] I know that there's a great tradition, at least in old Japan, of match-making.

Domoto: Yes, it's pretty much that way. A lot of the first generation, and the second generation too, parents and friends would get together and they'd say, "Gee, I know a good girl down there, good for him." They'd bring the families together. And in some cases, some families I know, whether they liked each other or not, they were more or less forced to go into a marriage. But in most cases the younger generation, or the second generation, I think the parents--. I know some parents were very strict--they had to be that way.

Even now, like the first generation, if they were Christian, they wanted someone from a Christian family rather than a Buddhist or Shinto or Catholic, whatever. As the age has advanced, I think that got more or less moderated, so that they were allowed to choose their own mates.

Riess: How was your first date with your wife arranged? Did you go to Guadalupe?

Domoto: Yes. We went down there and met, and talked.

Riess: Did you meet the family first?

Domoto: They were there all together. And then that was the time of the Fair, '39, I guess, the Treasure Island Fair. So I invited her to come up and see the Fair, spend a day or two--I guess a day--and then she had to go back because she was working down there, too.

Riess: What was she doing?

Domoto: I think she was doing secretarial cashier work for a garage, a Japanese garage there at the time.

Riess: Had she had the opportunities for education that you had?

Domoto: Yes. She didn't finish, but I think she went to Cal. I think she went a year or two to college, and then the Depression, and then she had to go to work.

Riess: Guadalupe is way back of beyond. It's really a very small town.

Domoto: It was just a little town on the ocean. Santa Maria was the main town down there. There was a big agricultural community there,

big truck gardens. They were raising lettuce. I guess most of it was lettuce crop there.

Riess: She came up to the Fair, and then?

Domoto: I guess then more or less we kind of liked about the same things. She was more mature than most of the others, too, having been the support for the family. We more or less--. Pretty soon the family said, "Have you decided?" And finally we decided. [laughing]. So we were married in the Stanford Chapel. [August, 1940]

Riess: That must have been a great occasion, I'm sure, much happiness on everyone's side.

Domoto: As far as we were concerned, we wanted a simple wedding, family, friends. They wanted to make a big event out of it. With us, we just wanted to get away. [laughs]

Riess: Did you get away for a honeymoon?

Domoto: Yes, we did. I think that was pretty nearly Labor Day weekend, and we went to Oregon, drove up the coast and went to a place there.

Move to Livingston, California; Settling the Business

Riess: After you had had that conversation with the deputy, what happened next for you?

Domoto: The report came that if you moved away from Zone 1, the danger zone, moved into the valley areas further in, or if you moved to certain other states away from the coast, you could leave. And my sister [Tokuko Domoto Kishi] was married and living in Livingston.¹ Livingston, having been a Japanese colony, farming colony--that's right between Modesto and--. That's where Foster Farms has all its chickens now. [laughs]

We said, "Well, at least if we move there we won't have to go to a camp right away." So we went down there, and we spent maybe six months or so. The funny part is, if I'd stayed here I'd have gone to assembly center a day later than we had to go to assembly

¹Livingston, referred to as the Yamato Colony, was founded in 1906 as an agrarian settlement of Japanese colonists.

center in Livingston. In Livingston we went to the assembly center a day before the Bay Area went to Tanforan.

Riess: When you went to Livingston, did you go knowing that you had to close down your operation around here for a period of time? What did you have to think about when you went to Livingston?

Domoto: I wasn't able to do too much thinking. There wasn't much to do. The nursery was getting along. All I could do was--the man I had working for me wanted to take charge.

Riess: That's the man named Peter Milan?

Domoto: Yes. And then the banking side, Merle Carden--he was at the American Trust at that time--said he'd take care of more or less the banking side for me.

Riess: Is he a man you feel grateful to? Did he do well by you?

Domoto: I think he treated me as well as any banker. Probably more--partly as a friend.

Riess: Were you able to stay in touch with him?

Domoto: Well, he did, because he [Merle Carden] had to make certain reports of the nursery to me. That is, as far as the financial side was concerned. Whenever they sold anything, he'd have to make a report to me. He mailed a monthly statement to camp because he was--I was doing the business with his bank, and he was the manager of the bank there.

Riess: The bank took over the business?

Domoto: No, I had control of the business. But he was watching it. The payments, taxes, he'd let me know, and they'd go ahead and pay the taxes out of what we had.

True Friends

Domoto: But you were asking earlier about friends. The ones that either wrote or came to see me right after we went into assembly center, of several other nurserymen friends I had, there were about four or five, and out of those four or five, two of them came down to see me in the assembly center, to find out.

We were a month in the assembly center, while the camps were being built. And one or two, correspondence. The others I thought were real buddy-buddies, one person who lived just maybe fifteen miles or so from the assembly center, didn't even come to see me. So then I figured--.

The funny part of it, all four of these people that I knew pretty well, never too much socially, but business-wise and others, got to know them in a friendly way, most of them were Christian Scientists.

Riess: How interesting!

Domoto: I often wondered if this was happenstance or what. In fact, one of the ladies, who was a quite devout Christian Scientist, but she never tried to preach to me or proselytize, when she came down to see me before we had to leave the assembly center, she gave me a package, the Christian Science bible. And she used to come out to visit.

Riess: Did you read it?

Domoto: No, it's still in the package. I never opened it.

Riess: A woman. She had a nursery?

Domoto: Yes, she used to have a nursery. When she started in, she didn't know too much about getting camellias. But she used to buy plants from my dad.

Riess: What was her name?

Domoto: Stahle. When she started a business down there, my dad told her about different things.

Dad had a way he would talk to some people, talk to them more like a father or something. If he gave them any advice, he wouldn't try to go overboard. If he liked you he liked you, if he didn't he didn't. Because of the connection with my dad, then when she started to buy some camellia plants, I was supplying her with camellia plants. Later, this was after the war, she was killed in an accident by a hit-and-run driver.

Riess: That's quite a story. And the others of this group, how did you know they were Christian Scientists? Did they tell you?

Domoto: No. I found out afterwards that some of them were. Indirectly. I never asked them their religion. That's something I never wanted to ask anybody. Their beliefs, that was their own, and

they have a right to live that way, as long as it lives up to the standards I like.

Riess: Well, it sounds like these were good people. But now, you said that two or three of them didn't visit you?

Domoto: No, most of the others--of course, the war came along and there was limited travel. But Mr. Clarke, who I mentioned earlier, came down to see me, wanted to know what arrangements I wanted to make for the plants. He said he would do anything he could to sell some of my plants, he would see what he could do.

Riess: He would sell your plants?

Domoto: Yes. He was a plant broker, he was selling some of my plants for me, too. So the connection there was established even before.

And the other was the Mr. Goepner from the--used to be Podesta Baldocchi's in San Francisco. Eddie Goepner.

Riess: And he came down to visit you in the assembly center?

Domoto: No, but he sent word down that if there was anything I needed right away--. He was in San Francisco, of course, and the assembly center was way down there, you couldn't travel. But he sent word down that anything I needed, he'd get for me. As far as things we were supplying him with, flowers, he'd like to keep on getting those.

Riess: So he would deal with Peter Milan.

Domoto: Yes.

And the other one was a man in southern California who was a plant broker who represented several of the nurseries down there, and he'd sell some of my plants to nurseries in southern California. His name was Alf Peterson. I think he was--I'm not sure whether he was Danish or Swedish.

Riess: These are people who really reached out.

Domoto: Reached out beyond the call of duty. [laughs] There were others afterwards that started to correspond, but most of the other nurserymen that I knew, I was more or less familiar with in the business way, but never in the social way.

Riess: So you weren't surprised?

Domoto: I think part of it, too, is the way things--social-wise, it wasn't too popular for a white person to be associating with a "Jap."

Riess: We're talking about in the thirties, earlier than the war?

Domoto: In the thirties to the time of the war. You could associate, but not too much in a real social way. At least as far as my conviction was concerned. So rather than embarrass them by trying to go the social meetings, I just abstained from going.

Riess: Because you wanted to spare them some embarrassment?

Domoto: Yes, right.

Riess: And for you it would have been awkward, also, if you felt that way.

Domoto: Yes, it was awkward both ways.

Then later, as things changed--and even now it's changed so much--but when I went down to receive the award [1970] I felt, "Oh, why bother? I don't need their award." I said I didn't feel like it. But the ones that asked me to come down were this younger generation of nurserymen, much younger, and they said, "Come on," and I was glad I went, because their feeling, most of them, towards the Japanese is more of, "Let's get together more."

The older generation, there were a few that were really "anti" all the way from the beginning, and those, it was all right, you could do business with them if you wanted to, but you didn't have to.

Riess: You mean the older generation of white nurserymen?

Domoto: Yes. Maybe business-wise they'd get along, but as far as socially or otherwise, they never got too close that way.

Riess: But in the next generation?

Domoto: The next generation, there's more. In fact Its Uneka, owner of a nursery down in Carpinteria, I think was the first, probably second generation member of the Japanese community to become president of the California Association. And he went on to become a president of the American Association of Nurserymen. Shows how much change there was in that period of time. And that's the way society has been all the way through.

Riess: It also shows how important the work has been of the Japanese-American nurserymen. Aren't they a strong force, as a group?

Domoto: Maybe not so much as a group. I think more as individuals.

Calling Names

Riess: It's upsetting to me when you say "Jap," that "People wouldn't want to associate with a Jap." People used that word in front of you? People called you a "Jap?"

Domoto: Sometimes, they'd say, "Jap...anese." [laughs] They didn't mean it that way, it would kind of embarrass them. They'd say, "Jap...anese."

Riess: And you refer to the rest of us as "whites," rather than "Caucasian."

Domoto: Yes. The term "Caucasian" I don't think came up until much later in history. You were either the white, yellow, or black. Or red. The racial color distinction was the dividing. Unless you're in a group like in San Francisco Bay Area, where you have big colonies, you were either a Chinaman--a "Chink"--or a "Dago," or "Wop," or--

Riess: And for the Mexicans, or Spanish?

Domoto: No, Spanish really didn't come in, although they were the original one of the settlers in the area, you didn't hear much about them that way.

Riess: Whites were just "whites?" Or for the Japanese community was there a way that whites were also being called something bad?

Domoto: No. Probably the term was Haku-jin. Haku is white, and jin is men. That was the term that most people used. There was supposed to be another more polite term--I think it was--[pause]

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Domoto: I think it was--[pause, thinking] The slang term they used was Keto. That's about the same as saying a "Jap," to refer to a white. The other polite term I think they were using was the term Seiyo-jin. It means a foreigner. I think that would be the term they were using in Japan. Because any white person there would be a foreigner. I don't know the exact translation of Seiyo-jin, but I remember that term used for white people.

Livingston. Assembly Center

Riess: What did you do during that six-month period in Livingston?

Domoto: Nothing.

Riess: Just waiting?

Domoto: Just waiting to see what happened. We couldn't move, we had to stay there. There were limits to how far we could go, leave the premises.

Riess: You were with your sister and her family.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: And what business were they in?

Domoto: They had a vineyard down there, farming. See, Livingston was an area from the days of when different families would get together and farm a tract of land, a farming group, one of the first of that type of farming operation. And mostly they were Japanese, but they were all of Christian faith. So when we went down there, we figured they were all Japanese, but then they were more Christians, so possibly the last of the group to be moved again. That was our idea, moving down there.

Riess: They would be safest?

Domoto: The last, because also we were in a zone away from the coast, and we would be the last to be moved further inland.

Riess: Because of the Christian thing, too?

Domoto: Yes. That was the way we thought. I don't know if that entered their mind or not. I don't think [anything made any difference], because we went to the assembly center the day before the Bay Area did. I could have stayed right here and moved from here to the assembly center--to a relocation camp.

My oldest daughter, Marilyn, was born the day earlier than we had to go into the assembly center. She was born outside the camp, because the facilities in the assembly center weren't set up.

Riess: She was born in Livingston?

Domoto: Yes. I think it was in Merced hospital. Anyway, we called her an evacuation baby--in more ways than one!

Riess: [laughs] She must be interested in this history. Is she?

Domoto: Some, yes. I guess one of her daughters, Cristina, was more interested in family history. The next generation. And I think that's true not just of my family, but of several other families, who found that the third generation, in school or something, they want to know more about their ancestors. I think that's more or less true not only in Japanese, but other races, too.

Riess: Who did you take with you to Livingston? Your father?

Domoto: Father; yes, and my brother and his wife.

Riess: Were you making the decisions for the family at that point?

Domoto: As far as my own family, we were trying to take care of Dad and my sisters.

Riess: Having gone to Livingston, starting out from that assembly point, did that give you a different choice of camps?

Domoto: No. We didn't know from day to day where we were going or what we were going to do. We were just told to pack up, and we could bring so much goods in a suitcase, and that's it.

Riess: That's when you went to the assembly center.

Domoto: Assembly center. From the assembly center they said, "Now, pack up." We got on a train, and from the Livingston area we went to Colorado, Amache Relocation Center, in Granada, Colorado.

Riess: From Tanforan, did any people go to Granada?

Domoto: No. Unless they had family that were split up, and if they wanted to rejoin their families. That was much later where they were trying to make things easier.

Family Break-up

Riess: Everyone from the Livingston area went to Amache?

Domoto: Livingston and Merced, and I think there was another group from some other area that came, too, to Amache Relocation Center.

Riess: Is Amache a Japanese word?

Domoto: I don't think so. It could be Indian or something. It was the name given to the camp, because it was just right out in the desert, nothing around. The nearest little town was maybe about a mile and a half, a railroad town. Granada was the name of it.

Riess: How was your father during this period? Was he depressed or stoic?

Domoto: Oh, he didn't say too much. But he wasn't well. He was sick. I'm not sure, but I think when the banks foreclosed on his nursery, I think--he never said anything, but I think that hurt him more than anything else. But his health wasn't too good anyway, so between the two--. And his brother, older brother Frank, who used to talk with him once a week almost, had gone to Japan. I think he was already back when the war broke out.

One of the things, I imagine pretty much like is happening in Europe now, one of my sisters [Kaeko Domoto Nakajima] had married a fellow that was a college graduate here, but Japanese-born. So when the war was declared, those that were working for the consulate at the time, and any other businessmen from Japan, they were allowed to go back to Japan. They had one steamer, steamship--I forgot the name--but they were allowed to leave for Japan from San Francisco. They had to pack up and go in a hurry too.

My sister came and talked to my dad, and he said, "Well, you married him. You liked him. You have his children." I think either one or two children were born here, San Francisco. So he said, "That's a decision for you to make. If you want to separate from your husband now, or you want to live together, that's your decision to make. I can't tell you which is going to be better for you. Right now, I can't predict anything, good or bad." But since her husband had been with the consulate, maybe they could go to Japan, and they may find something to do. Here, there would be not much he could do. So they left for Japan.

Riess: And what happened to them?

Domoto: They're still there. But I haven't seen her since.

Riess: Do you correspond?

Domoto: Not too often, because I don't write. I think her husband came, because he had an anniversary meeting of the college that he went to. He came for that. I haven't seen my sister since the day

they left. The nephew, I met the nephew. He came over and studied here. He's back East now.

Riess: You haven't lost those people completely.

Domoto: Well, our relatives are scattered all over. Unless you're real close, there is nothing much to keep us in contact.

Riess: You don't have a Domoto family reunion?

Domoto: No. In fact, we were never--I guess we were really close, but when you're separated by continents, or states, to hold just a sort of family reunion is out of the question. Nowadays, you can go overnight even across continents or across countries, but in those days, just to even go from either to Los Angeles or Seattle or wherever, it's quite a job. You had to pack up and everything. I think travel has made it possible for the families to get closer together, but I don't think the family life is as close as it was earlier. I think that changed [in recent] generations.

And attitudes, too. Yesterday I was listening to Donahue's program, and it was inter-racial marriage couples talking. Mostly between the black and white. Black and white, or Filipino. But their comments, if I think of them, they're at a point where all their idea is no more family. It's "me for myself."

Selfish is not the word I should use, but they only think of their generation as themselves. They're not thinking about their future youngsters or their past generations, the relationships there. It's, "Oh, I love him, and I don't care what anybody says." At least the ones that were on the program were that way. I don't say that all of them are that way, but that's the feeling I have.

Riess: To keep the marriage together you need more than just two people.

Domoto: I think you're putting yourself in one category of thinking already. [laughs]

I think the way you hear so much these days, if they get married and go away, they might keep in touch with the family, but as far as close ties, I don't think they have them. You see TV or radio about having a family reunion, but that's only when the older parents are still alive. When they get to the second or third generation, and they're slipping far apart, they don't see them often, you're closer to your neighbor or something like that. It's not that you're cold, but just the changing times.

Riess: The family reunion becomes artificial.

Domoto: Artificial. You meet, and unless you have something in common to talk about, there's nothing to talk about. They ask you what you're doing, and you tell them. It goes in one ear and out the other. [laughing]

Riess: Yes, that's true.

Did your uncle [Frank] stay in Japan for the war, then, the one who went back [Takanoshin Domoto]?

Domoto: Yes. He went to Japan. He died there in Japan. [December 29, 1940]

Father's Death

Domoto: My dad passed away in the camp, relocation [October 30, 1943]. And when we came back, brought the remains back to Oakland, when we arrived at the depot here, Pete, who was taking over for me, he said, "Toichi, I've got more bad news for you. Your uncle [Henry] passed away in Milwaukee [November 10, 1943]." So my father, and the brother that was closest to him in the business, I guess, passed away within two or three days of one another.

Riess: He was in Milwaukee?

Domoto: Yes. See, if you left the area before, you could go to certain areas if you were able to find places to go to.

Riess: What was that brother's name, the one that was in Milwaukee?

Domoto: Henry. [Motonoshin]

Riess: You were able to bring the body back, your father's remains, back? Were you still in camp with him when he died?

Domoto: I had just probably gone out to work [in Illinois] already, and then I got word that he passed away. So I went back to the camp. I think--I'm not sure, but I think the manager of the Amache camp was a very understanding person. I think he made arrangements so that I could bring my father's remains back to Oakland, because we had a family plot here. My cousin came back with me, and I had one other guard--I guess he was either a guard or escort--that I had to pay his way to come back here with the remains.

Riess: Was that uncomfortable, to be traveling during the war for you anyway?

Domoto: When you have to travel on whatever train was available, it's not very comfortable anyway.

Riess: Yes. But I mean, you were the only Japanese face maybe on that train?

Domoto: Oh, yes. Oriental-wise, funny thing, when I got back into Hayward, others thought I--they didn't know. Strangers took me for Chinese. The Chinese were allowed to stay.

Riess: Any Oriental on the street would be Chinese by this definition?

Domoto: Yes. In fact, quite often I used to be taken for Chinese.

Riess: That sounds like a situation that would make for a lot of bad feelings.

Domoto: Oh, see, the general population don't know too much, so for quite a while the Chinese had to put a sign, "This store operated by Chinese," or "I am Chinese," or had a button to show that they were Chinese, before the Japanese were moved out of the area.

Riess: That meant that people who should have been brothers were already turning away from each other, the Chinese and Japanese?

Domoto: Yes. See, that part of history goes back from the time, I guess, of the Chinese-Japanese War, where since Japan won the war, the Chinese were looked down on.

From my standpoint of looking back, most of the civilization had come from China into Japan. It was modified, the same as they do nowadays, Western culture. Whereas, the group that grew up during that war period, the Chinese were looked down on as not being equal, because they were the survivors of the war.

Riess: What was the community at Amache, was it an agricultural project?

Domoto: No.

Riess: What did they keep the interns doing?

Domoto: Nothing.

Riess: In California they were working in field work, weren't they?

Domoto: Some of the camps had to grow their own vegetables or produce. I think probably in Amache later they may have put in little home gardens in the space they had around there, or community gardens.

But I left before they did much of that; I don't know too much about camp life.

But you know, the sad part, when I arrived back, they had the gravesite already dug. We went [there] from the train with the coffin, my escort, the undertaker, the owner of the cemetery, and the minister--and my cousin and myself. It was an awful bleak feeling, especially where you are used to having hundreds of people at a funeral like my father's.

I don't know exactly what--. It wasn't necessarily a sad feeling, because I had been away from family before, like during the college years. I think it was more of a feeling of desolation. That's the best way I can describe it. And yet, I don't say I disapprove, but I don't like the big showing at funerals. I'd rather the money that's spent for the funeral, if they would use that to help some other needy family. I'd rather have that.

Riess: There were so many feelings at that graveside at that time, that you couldn't help but have a feeling of desolation.

Domoto: Yes. And I thought, well, at least my father had died either at his home, there or at a hospital. And wartime--what about these boys in the army that got shot, bodies shot to pieces, and their remains sent back in a bag. How did their families feel? The human feeling, if they are a good family, I don't think changes regardless of race.

Riess: Yes. The feelings at the graveside can range from sorrow to anger. You have to sort of fight those feelings, leave them alone practically. They're too much.

Domoto: If you can overcome that part of it, reason yourself out, it's all right. But for those that can't, it must be hell for them.

More on Schramm's Nursery

[Interview 6: August 26, 1992] ##

Riess: When you left Amache to work in Illinois, did Alice come with you?

Domoto: Not right away. I went first, and then later she came out, because I wasn't sure whether I would like the job or the surroundings. At least we knew what the conditions were in the

camp. So I think it was almost six months or so before she came out with Marilyn.

Riess: When you started out in Illinois, you lived with a family?

Domoto: Yea.

Riess: And then did you have a separate home when Alice came?

Domoto: When they came, we did. We rented a house there. Later the employer bought another house right next to where we were working, and we moved there. So we were right close to the job, just like I am here, just a step away from where I was working.

Riess: Was it a nice house?

Domoto: Yes. It was one of the older homes, but it had been owned by a painter, and then he bought a farm, so they were able to buy the house from him. The owner's house, and their mother's house, and then the next house.

Riess: What I'm asking, I guess, is whether you were being treated as a hired hand or as a professional?

Domoto: More like a friend. Not a professional--I went there as a professional worker, but I was treated more like one of the family, which was really unusual at that time. I could appreciate the difference.

Riess: You can appreciate it from having talked to other people since?

Domoto: Oh, at that time, and knowing what the conditions would be otherwise.

Riess: That was 1944?

Domoto: Must have been '44, '45. I don't remember the dates, but that's close.

Riess: Did you expect to get back to Hayward, or were you beginning to think that Hayward was a distant memory?

Domoto: No. I wasn't sure, but I still had the place being operated--that is, being kept. My hope was that I might be able to get back here, to California, because the prospects of a place in the Deep South, or other camellia-growing areas, research there [made it appear that it] wasn't any more favorable than here. Here I had a place already started; it would be easier than trying to break into a new place where I was not known.

Riess: And was there a future with Schramm's Nursery?

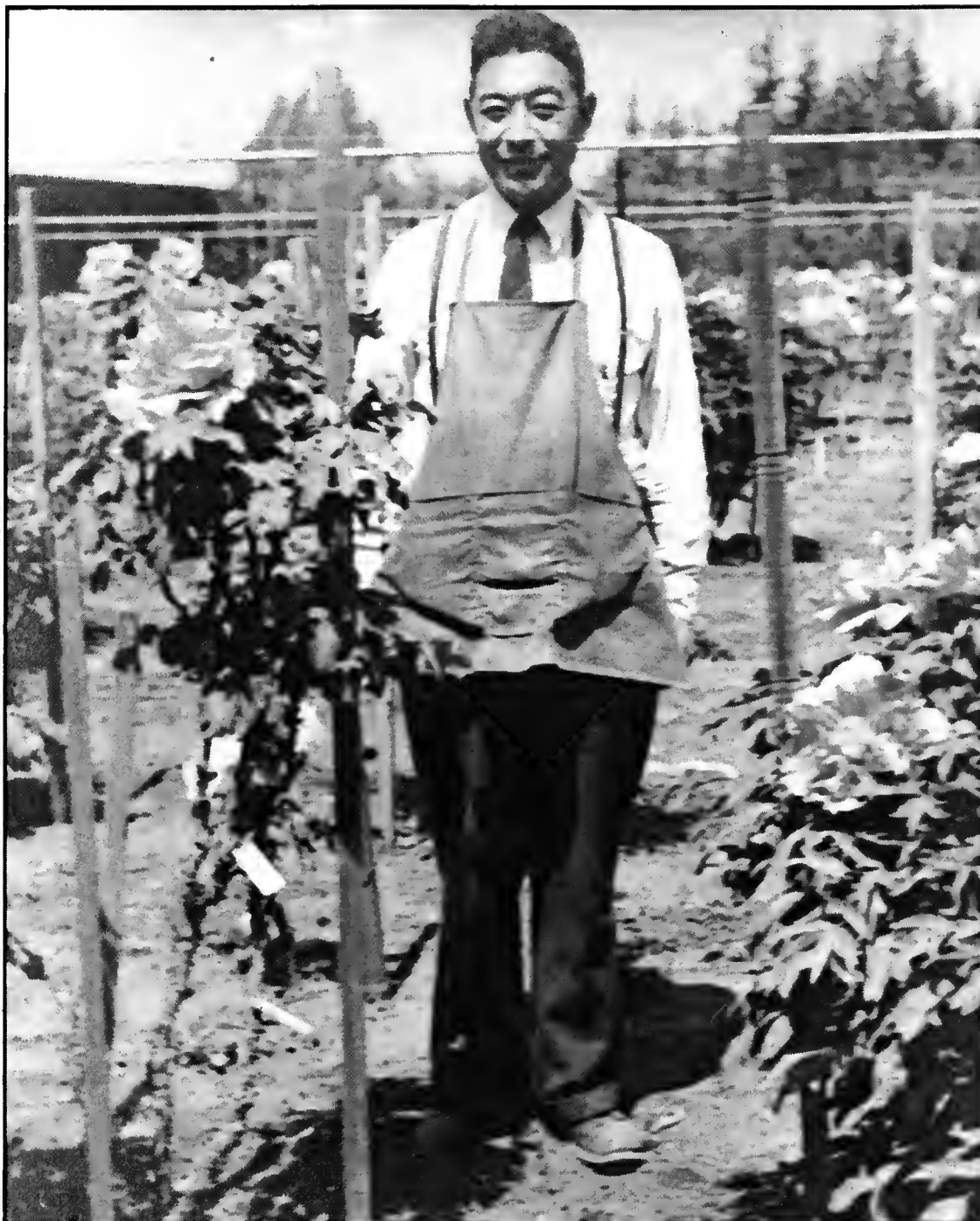
Domoto: No. Actually, that was a different type of operation. It was strictly a cut-flower business, raising gardenias, camellias.

Riess: They weren't interested in having you start your own growing division or something?

Domoto: No, because that was a limited source of supply, and limited demand. I could do the same thing back here. Weather conditions got cold [laughs], I still thought of California.

Riess: When you were there, how did you keep in touch with everyone? By telephone, mail?

Domoto: Mostly by mail. There wasn't much need to, because they weren't doing anything here except trying to manage what was here. The only time a letter or something would come in, it was more or less of a legal report or a monthly report, something like that.



Toichi Domoto and his tree peonies, probably April 1934. Mr. Domoto explains that a white shirt and tie were not his gardening outfit, although the tool apron was standard.

XII TREE PEONIES

Riess: A friend of mine, whose house burned in the fire last October, lost all of her tree peonies in the fire, too. She recalled getting them from you, a long time ago! Tree peonies were what you were working on when you left for the relocation camp, weren't you?

Domoto: Yes. Mostly. I was working with peonies all along, but they're slow. People didn't know much about tree peonies. I was actually trying to change what was being sold, but peony propagation is poor and slow and I had to keep something else to move or sell. So I still had the camellias. Then the demand got stronger, my peonies built up and they were starting to go pretty good. At that time I think I had, between the place here and also a piece of property that I had owned, bought, in Alvarado, at one time I had about five acres of tree peony seedlings.

Early in my work with the peonies I wrote to Professor A. P. Saunders, secretary of the American Peony Society, for information on breeding peonies. He wrote to say that Japanese peonies, there's no record of their genealogy. He said to plant as many seeds as I could from my better plants and select from that.

Riess: Did you go into peonies out of curiosity?

Domoto: I'd say the fascination of trying to grow something that was slow but beautiful.

Riess: Tell me about tree peonies. Are they a Japanese import originally?

Domoto: Originally, they probably came from China. The Japanese form is a different type of flower than the Chinese. "Tree" is really a misnomer, because when the dried flower specimens were sent back to either England, or wherever, to the Continent, from China, the flowers were so big that the botanists--the collector didn't say

anything about the size of the shrub where he got it from, and the flowers were so large that the botanist describing it gave it the name "tree" [Paeonia arborea] because flowers that size couldn't be on a bush; they must be on a tree. That's how it got named tree peony, as against the regular herbaceous peonies that were common in the East and Middle West where they come up and die down.

Riess: I think I probably have not seen tree peonies.

Domoto: They're not very common, because they're very slow propagating, hard to propagate. This friend you talk about, she was probably getting some of the plants that I had imported from Japan or Europe at that time. Since then, my field of seedlings started to come in bloom. Then they started to sell peonies by color and form, rather than by name. But originally, most of the ones we had were Japanese-named peonies, as against the European varieties.

Riess: You were hybridizing also?

Domoto: I was trying to hybridize, but I was just collecting seeds and planting. There's a difference between hybridizing and just collecting, because I was trying to cross some of the peonies with a few of the others. But the main thing was trying to get seedlings that I could get seeds from, a true strain where I could plant the seeds, instead of having to go through the process of trying to graft. [Toichi Ruby is one Domoto hybrid.]

Riess: You can't just root cuttings?

Domoto: No. Cuttings are rather difficult. They do root, but it's rather difficult, and the amount of vegetative wood available for that would be very limited, because the shrub just makes one growth in the season, in the spring. Each branch is probably--if they've got five or six leaflets, that would be a very good growth. And if you only have a plant with about two or three shoots, it's very limited, the amount of propagation you could do.

Riess: What do you graft to?

Domoto: The original Japanese ones were grafted on the wild moutan, which has a big root. They are a wild root that they dug up and brought in.

There are two species: the purple-flowered one, and then another one they call Rock's selection, a white. Those were two wild varieties.

Riess: Rock's selection?

Domoto: [Joseph] Rock was the plant explorer [sent in the 1930s to collect seeds from a lamasery garden which he sent to Arnold Arboretum]. The species is named after him. Rock I think was probably one of the early English botanists, and he found the wild species. I don't know what the Chinese were doing, but the Japanese, the farmers used to grow the moutan, the wild one, and bring the roots into the nurseries. Then the nurserymen would graft the selected varieties onto this wild root.

Riess: And when you're grafting, you don't need to use new growth?

Domoto: It's that season's growth. So it's limited what you could get.

Riess: But it's a surer thing than if you try to do it from a cutting?

Domoto: Oh, cutting, you couldn't get very many, and at that time I don't think there was anyone really able to grow any from cuttings. What they thought were cuttings actually would be a division of the plant, and some of them were calling those cuttings.

Riess: Was anyone else working on tree peonies when you were?

Domoto: Not to any great extent. I think there was a nursery in Michigan that was growing some, but we were depending mostly on import. When my father was importing them from Japan, and later when I was able to get some started, named varieties from Japan, they were still grafting on the roots of moutan. The moutan roots, instead of just spreading out, they were all kind of tied into it like a bundle. They would probably be about eighteen inches long, and a bunch of roots tied. And there would be one little scion sticking up on one side where it had been grafted.

Riess: How much of a section of the moutan?

Domoto: Most of those would probably just have one eye, and that--they would call it one-year graft.

Riess: But if you had an eighteen-inch piece of root, how many would they graft on? Just one?

Domoto: Just the one. They grafted it on the stem, not on the root, and you just have one stem. That was one-year graft. Later the exporters used to have what they call a two-year graft. And I thought, "That's funny. Gee, they must get a tremendous growth from that plant there to get the long internodes." Then I found out what they were doing. Actually, they were taking a piece of two-year wood with the one-year wood from the stock plants, so

that the internodes were much longer. And here, we get charged for a two-year, when actually it was only one-year graft.

Riess: Did it give it a real boost?

Domoto: Well, yes, because of all of that heavy understock. But then the trouble we ran up against here, when we sold the plants to the customer, or in the nursery, we would get all these suckers that would come up from the understock. And we'd think, "Gee, that's good, we got the plant," and then we found out it was the understock and not the graft.

A lot of the older plantings--. There used to be a place in, I think, Mission San Jose, one of the estates, where they had a big row, when I got interested, a big row of moutan peonies. And it turned out that they were the wild varieties that had taken over. They were all about five feet and very bushy.

Riess: And what color was the bloom?

Domoto: Magenta color.

Riess: And they had the peony fragrance?

Domoto: No. Some of the tree peonies are fragrant, and others are just musky, more like a poppy smell, flowering poppies, you wouldn't call them fragrant. It has an odor, but not a fragrance.

Riess: And it's the herbaceous peony that's famously fragrant?

Domoto: Yes. And not all herbaceous are fragrant, either.

Riess: When you were making your selection, were you selecting for color, or what did you work on?

Domoto: Mainly at the time we were trying to propagate so that we could get some plants going. Of course pinks and whites and deep reds would be the--they were all looking for the ones that they couldn't get. Then the more double form of flowers: most of the Japanese ones were single, or semi-double. The Chinese varieties, the European, were a very full type, more like the full herbaceous type of peony.

I used to describe Japanese peonies as silky, and European-- the difference was between silk and satin. One really had a sheen. The other had the color, but you don't see the sheen in the petal.

Riess: Does the tree peony need a cold winter?

Domoto: It's better where it gets a dormant season. Southern California. I had a schoolmate who was an architect, in Pasadena, and he was on a hillside there, and he was able to keep some growing. But where it doesn't get that dormant chill, the flowering will be kind of limited.

Riess: It doesn't get that in the Bay Area, does it?

Domoto: It doesn't, but it gets enough to do well around the Bay Area.

Riess: How about the dryness?

Domoto: The main thing is, it only makes the one growth in the spring, so if they got enough nourishment at that time, and then are kept from drying out in the summer, you have it made.

Riess: What if someone with unlimited money wanted to be growing tree peonies, where would they go? What would their source be?

Domoto: No source.

Riess: Could individuals get things from abroad?

Domoto: They could import them, but even abroad, the source of supply was very limited. When I was importing from Japan, I was only able to get a few hundred from a grower that was supposed to be a peony grower. When I ordered more, because I was able to get a permit up to about a couple thousand plants, I wasn't--.

This particular grower was very honest. He was getting them from all different growers, and he said, "Those plants that I furnish will be true to the name and color. But those I buy for you, sorry, I can't guarantee those." Because there was a very limited supply. The flower that comes in the spring, it's like the herbaceous, it comes and it's gone, and the rest of the time it doesn't look like anything, so that unless you could sell it when it was in blossom, the demand wasn't there.

Riess: Was it popular in Japan?

Domoto: I don't know. They probably used some, but I think most of it was a limited supply.

Riess: You're talking about getting in such a massive shipment. Did the quarantine laws change?

Domoto: The plant quarantine law that went into effect in 1917, I think, Quarantine 37, after that, we could get only plants that were certified free of insect disease, and free of soil, and then

mostly for propagating purposes only, so that the USDA was limiting the amount of plants that could come in.

Riess: Was that an enlightened law?

Domoto: You wonder whether it wasn't really working to the advantage of American growers. Because it turned out economically harder to get foreign material, and so there was less foreign competition.

Riess: But you were importing for propagating purposes.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: The root comes wrapped?

Domoto: In moss. The first ones that came in had these long roots, and then all of a sudden--I don't know what year it was--I was expecting a big box, a big crate, and instead I just got one little box for my thousand roots. They had started using the herbaceous roots for understock, like they were doing in Europe. So instead of getting one little scion with a mass of roots, it was just about the size of a good cigar. That's the scion and root together.

Riess: Had they learned that from Europeans?

Domoto: I think so, because the European variety, the peonies you got from Europe, most of the grafted plants were very short. The plants I was importing from Lemoine in France, the plants were better established, older plants.

Riess: Was the herbaceous root stock better?

Domoto: The herbaceous root stock was used more as a nursing stock, nursing root. In other words, there were hopes that this scion would make its own roots above it. It was just something to keep it growing until it made its own roots. And unless it made its own roots, why, that's the end of the plant.

Riess: What was the mortality rate?

Domoto: I would say, once they got into the average gardener's planting, the mortality probably would be about 80-90 percent.

Riess: Wow!

Domoto: Because after it flowered, if it did come into the flower, it doesn't look like much more than a piece of stick. Unless you're

an avid peony grower, they wouldn't think anything about taking care of it.

Riess: But you imported them on the herbaceous stock, and then you grew them to gallon sizes?

Domoto: No. You see, the import stock, we were not allowed to sell those at the time, because we had brought them in for propagating stock. In recent years they have been bringing them in from Japan or Asia somewhere, and the nurseries put them in gallon cans and sell them in spring when they flower. But after they flower, that's the end, in most cases.

Riess: Once again because the gardener doesn't know?

Domoto: Doesn't know anything about taking care of them.

And then the other thing is that after it's through blooming it doesn't look like anything. So, lack of care during the summertime. But most of it would be lack of experience of what to do with it.

Riess: For you the propagation problems were never really solved?

Domoto: No. We got into a sort of a friendly agreement with one of the largest peony growers in the Middle West. That was Roy Klehm, in [South Barrington], Illinois. They were mainly growing herbaceous peonies for the cut-flower business, like Memorial Day business. Then they got started into the tree peonies.

When I started to sell plants from my big seedling block, which I was selling to brokers in New York and Michigan, the seedlings, some were marked for color and the others were just unmarked seedlings, like the moutan seedlings.

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Domoto: The percentages were very poor.

Roy Klehm came out to look at my field in the spring when it bloomed, and we were talking, and he said, "Where did you get your roots?" I told him that some of them were from peony growers back East. He said, "Well, maybe it might have been the poor roots," because when the herbaceous peonies are sold in the fall, they dig the clumps up, and the long roots they cut back and the divisions are sold. The tips of the peonies they cut off, they just throw them away. So that's what they were sending him.

Riess: So it's really--

Domoto: Garbage.

He said he found out that they had to have good roots, so he was raising seedlings on good clean roots. And he said, "When you get to the grafting season"--because I was using the same kind of grafting method they were using, but my percentage was poorer-- "I'll select out a bunch of roots like I would use, and then I'll divide half-and-half." We knew the techniques of grafting were the same. But the scions we were getting out of my field, and some other varieties, I would send him the scions, and he had some there. So we would be doing it about the same time, and trying to correlate the handling conditions the same.

The end result was that with 500 roots that we were experimenting with, I ended up with only about 5 percent growing after about three years, and he was getting a little better percentage, he was getting about 50 percent.

Riess: Why was that?

Domoto: I think weather conditions.

Riess: Because of the dormant period?

Domoto: Dormant period, and not enough growth on the young graft to make its own root. By the time it should be making its own root, the mother root probably expired, the strength.

Riess: So the dormant period gives kind of boost to the plant?

Domoto: Yes. Whatever it did, that was a difference.

Riess: How about the soil, rooting medium? That was all the same?

Domoto: I don't think that made much difference. We tried all different kinds, different methods. They were doing the same thing. But the thing was that nursing root there, the hopes that the scion would make its own roots. But how to induce that root to be formed? We even tried using some of the rooting hormones that came out about the time I was working with it, but that didn't seem to make much difference, because unlike other shrubs that keep growing, it [the peony] only makes one growth in the spring, the wood growth. That's the total growth for the year.

Unless we could get them to grow, propagation is slow. In fact, some of them were even trying layering. You could layer some, but it would take about two years before the layer would be ready to be taken off. It was a costly, slow process, so commercially it never paid.

Riess: Did you lose money on this whole thing? Did you invest a lot that you never got back?

Domoto: Oh, mostly time and effort. In between there wasn't much to do to take care of them. I think that if the war hadn't come along, I probably would have been able to keep on raising seedlings, and selling the plants as seedlings, because the seedlings--most of them were single, but they made a nice show, and they could be sold as seedlings.

Riess: Raising seedlings was not as difficult?

Domoto: It wasn't hard to grow once the seedling was formed, but it took at least three to five years for the seedlings to bloom. And then you couldn't tell what you were getting yet. There was no such thing as a true strain yet. I'd collect seedlings from the named varieties, but then I couldn't tell what I was going to get. If it was from a double variety, I might get single or it would revert back to anything else. Pinks, whites, reds.

Riess: It sounds like the hardest problem in floriculture you would ever have.

Domoto: It's one of those long-term deals, knowing what to do. It's like even in the orchid culture. Orchid culture goes way back, many hundred years, and they have--I guess you'd call it a stud book, so that all the present-day--. You get a plant with a certain name, but you would know that this was a cross, and you would know the parentage back of it. Just like race horse breeding, you have a family history there that you can rely on and see what would come out.

Whereas in the tree peonies there was no thing of that. And the time it takes to flower, it's so far between that commercially it would never pay.

Riess: Why did my friend love her tree peonies so?

Domoto: Oh, you get that one boost, that one thrill maybe for a week in the spring. But that thrill, once a year, was enough!

Riess: [laughs] My friend must have had so many that they were a mass.

Domoto: You don't have to have--if you have one good big plant in bloom, or a dozen plants, it's so spectacular that it thrills you. You get bit by the bug.

Riess: What is the size of a full-grown plant?

Domoto: A regular hybrid peony I guess would probably, if it was well taken care of, be maybe anywhere from three to five, six feet, and maybe three to four feet wide. There are dwarf-growing varieties and tall-growing ones.

Riess: How did you get bitten?

Domoto: Oh, seeing the plants that my father used to import from Japan.

Riess: And he would import and sell?

Domoto: Sell, yes.

Riess: And when he brought them in from Japan, were they in bud, or at what point did they come in? Were they larger plants?

Domoto: No. Just the one-year or two-year grafts. No full-grown plants. You couldn't buy any full-grown plants.

Riess: Maybe before the quarantine?

Domoto: No, even then that was the way it was, because they found-- actually the reason for that is, the roots are grown by farmers, and they'd bring them to the nursery peony grower, and he would graft them in the fall. And then the following fall they'd be shipped out. And when they were shipping out, the growth that was made would be cut off, and they'd put that top scion back on for the next year's crop. So all the ones we used to import would never have any top on them, just have one or two eyes at the most, and then be cut off then.

I thought, "Gee, they're very careful about how they prune it." I never realized what was happening. Then later, I found out the reason for that is because they had no moutan block where they would be growing the plants for scion wood. It's all small quantity production.

Riess: Your father kept a lot of plants and let them grow to full size?

Domoto: Most of it, we got them and we sold them. We kept a few.

Riess: Did you have the peonies planted out in a flower garden? Around your house, did you have a flower garden?

Domoto: No, not peonies. Most of the peonies, after the imports stopped, we had a few plants left around the nursery. I think there was one bed my dad had, maybe a dozen plants, and they were imported plants. Mr. Bobink, of Bobink and Atkins in New Jersey, he was

out in California looking around for some plants, and he saw them and he said, "What are you doing with those things?"

"Oh, maybe try to grow them."

"Oh," he said. "That's not a money-maker, it's too slow." He kind of pooh-poohed them.

But I was saving seeds, and we were trying to graft. When we first started it, the ones we got from Japan on the herbaceous root, we couldn't quite tell what it was.

We were having trouble finding enough moutan stock to graft on. My dad, even while I was grafting them, looked at this wild weed--not burdock, but it's a weed that comes up and has a bunch of small seeds, has a carrot-like root, I forgot the name of it, very fat root [maybe mullein or dock?]-he looked at it and said, "This looks like a herbaceous root. As long as you're grafting the others on other tree peony roots, try it." They grew, but then they it just goes wild. Then that was the end of the season, they just never made it.

Riess: It's an adventure, isn't it?

Domoto: It's a slow thing. If I had had to depend on that alone, I probably would be broke a long time.

Riess: How about a garden like Longwood Gardens, in their back rooms do they have people working away on such problems?

Domoto: Oh, they weren't trying to propagate, they would just get the plants going.

In fact, Longwood Gardens, that's the duPont property, and Mrs. duPont was out here at the time that my peonies were in bloom. The American Garden Society, one of the first meetings they had out on the Pacific Coast, they were out visiting, and it so happened the peonies were in bloom. She heard about it, and she wondered if she could come out and look at them. "Sure."

She came out, and I had a few that were in bloom, going up and down the field. (These were seedling blocks, not the main block, but the seedling blocks.) A call came in--they were waiting for her at dinner, for her to give a talk or something--and she said, "Well, that can wait. Only once in a lifetime will I get a chance like this to see so many peonies in bloom."

We walked up and down the aisles, and she asked about this one and that one. She said, "Are any of these for sale?" I said,

"Yes, except the ones I want to keep for stock." I think I ended up by sending her a couple of dozen plants.

Riess: I wonder how they've done?

Domoto: Well, most of those were on their own roots, so in some of the places they've done well.

Riess: Would Longwood propagate from them?

Domoto: No, most of those gardens, they weren't into the business of propagating as much as trying to keep the plants going.

Riess: Yes, but for their own shows, their big floral displays?

Domoto: Displays--one plant would make the show. So they weren't trying to increase the stock, but keep it going.

Riess: People like the duPonts I would think would be interested in sponsoring that kind of work on a species.

Domoto: I think a good many of them sponsored the plant exploration, just like anything else they would sponsor. But unless they had a personal interest in it themselves, that's as far as it went.

Riess: When you were working with the tree peonies, and you were also a member of Cal Hort Society, would you report on them at meetings?

Domoto: I don't think I made any reports on tree peonies as such, because that was just once a year when they would blossom. We had visitors come in when the field was starting to bloom. But the main thing was I had the plants, but I had no plants to sell.

Riess: Because then the war came?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: They needed how many more years?

Domoto: Well, the seedling blocks had come along, they were starting to flower, so I dug those up, and I kept some for stock plants, and the rest I sold. The stock field that I had, I had planted out for trying to learn how to graft them to propagate further.

I don't think any other growers in the East ever went into the tree peonies as a specialty.

Riess: And now today, in 1992?

Domoto: It's still scarcer than before.

Riess: Even with cloning techniques or whatever techniques people have now?

Domoto: As far as cloning, it wouldn't hurt any, but the cloning is rather costly, and they tell me that when you clone the plant for growing by that method of propagation that you have to be able to grow 10,000 plants a year in order to make it profitable.

Riess: You mean the science is so expensive?

Domoto: Yes. Even if they got that going. Even trying to get the seeds to grow in good--percentage-wise, it was hard.

A lady in Boyce Thompson Institute, back in New York, she was experimenting on breaking the dormancy, or how to make the tree peony seeds germinate. I don't know whether I have her paper here. I think she wrote several papers. Later, she was treating each seed to a certain amount of--I don't remember what the acid was, the chemical--to induce the plant to break its dormancy, to get it to grow. But to do that commercially, for what you were getting out of it, it just wouldn't pay. So I think her research as such just went that far and that was it.

Riess: Did anyone from the university, or the Department of Agriculture, have any particular helpful hints?

Domoto: They had no information to give me. The only thing is, if I had a disease problem, then I could get help, but as far as propagation and that, they didn't know anything more than I did. I was able to get more information from the growers back East.

Riess: Did you correspond or write with other growers, like Nassos Daphnis?

Domoto: No, he was retired too, but no, I would get what I could from him from the newsletter, and if I bought plants I'd have no way of propagating them.

Riess: David Reath?

Domoto: I think I had correspondence with him asking him about grafting, the same information as how they were propagating in Europe.

Riess: William Gatwick?

Domoto: No.

Riess: And A. P. Saunders?

Domoto: Yes, a couple of times, to ask certain questions about growing the seeds. That's when he said, "You're a young man yet. Plant as many seeds as you can, and see what you get."

Most of the men in the peony business now are the ones who got in after the Lutea hybrids were introduced.

Riess: What are the other difficult plants? Orchids?

Domoto: Oh, there must be other plants that are difficult, but unless there's enough of a demand for it, no one is spending that much money.

Your orchids, you see, are hobby plants for the wealthy, for the royalty, and people who have a gardener. They knew the different parent plants that they could cross, and they were able to get the flower. When you have what you might call the stud book, if you know that if you cross A and B, then you get D+, whereas A and C crossed may give you a bunch of duds, they could know that from the stud book.

Plants, unlike animals, their life can be extended by just getting plants from the same original plant. So the plant may be only ten years old, but its history may go back a hundred years. Whereas animals, you can't get the original stock plants. Once the stud and the female side is gone, that's it.

Riess: Right, unless you have a sperm bank or something like that.

Domoto: Yes. That of course is more recent, and even that is still experimental, and not really in strong commercial use.

Riess: Isn't it true that one of the responsibilities of the USDA is maintaining a bank of original early strains of plants?

Domoto: [question misunderstood] Oh, they have experimentations all over, depending on what they're growing. But that only lasts as long as the experiment goes on, and then they--it's the work of one man. When he retires or expires, that's the end of the experiment, unless there's something that becomes commercially profitable.

Riess: Is there a peony society?

Domoto: Oh, yes, it's quite famous, the American Peony Society. They issue a newsletter. [looks for copy] "Paeonia." It goes between the ones that are doing the hybridizing and trying to cross certain varieties. They report what's happening.

There is not too much about tree peonies. Most of it is about the herbaceous types, or the species. They publish a very good annual book that's quite thick. The editor there has been with them for quite a while. He's done a wonderful job building up the society.

Riess: Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and start thinking about your peonies, and how you could have done it differently?

Domoto: No. It's a slow process. I'd be awake in the morning before I could figure out what I was going to do. [laughter]

Riess: When you came back then after the war, what was left of your peony beds?

Domoto: The beds were there, and the big fields just were ready--old enough to come into flower. So I was able to select the ones that I kept for stock plants, propagating stock, and the others that were single, I was able to dispose of them. I sold them to brokers in New York, and I think in Michigan, but mostly in New York. One broker would take pretty near all I could supply, which wasn't very much anyway.

Riess: When the war was over, and you were back home, did you send out an announcement saying, "Domoto back in business?"

Domoto: No. I guess they found me, rather than me trying to find an outlet. I would get inquiries from brokers saying, "What do you have to sell?"

Smirnow, he was a peony hobbyist. He started to deal in peonies as a side business. He's gone; his sons took over in the peony business, and the firm I think now is gone already. But theirs was mostly a brokerage business. I think he imported one of the first tree peonies, species peonies, a yellow cross from Japan, Itoh hybrids, and introduced that to the peony trade. He was an ex-vice president or director of one of the old-named shirt makers in New York. Arrow Shirts.

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Domoto: When I got to know him, I think he was retired from actual operation. He was dealing with all kinds of peonies from around the world, and then seeds and so forth. There is a peony book, and most of his story is written up in there, so it would be more thorough. My contact is just what I knew about what he was doing. But as far as the rest of it, it's quite thorough in that book.

Riess: Your reference to Smirnow reminds me that many of your dealings must have been with people who could afford to spend anything they wanted on plants.

Domoto: Yes. They were looking for something special along that line.

Riess: They like to have the one and the only of something?

Domoto: That, and I think you get engrossed with certain things you like. Like with animals, you like cats, and from cats you might get into Siamese cats, and so forth. Plants are the same way, I think.





Looking west at the Hayward hills, over the fields
of tree peonies, and the land and buildings of
Toichi Domoto's nursery. City of Hayward is out
of sight, to the left in this 1934 photograph by
the Gabriel Moulin Studios.

XIII CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Meetings

Riess: Cal Hort Society started in 1935. Did you join right away?

Domoto: No, not right away. There again, Mr. Clarke was instrumental in bringing me to them, to one of their meetings. I had been invited quite often to join, but never was interested that way. And then Clarke said, "Well, this is a different group." Instead of Cal Hort, at that time I think it was called "Plant Materials," or something. Anyway, it was more of a specialized group. I think my first meeting was at one of the downtown--the Press Club or something, where they used to hold Cal Hort meetings before they moved out to the Arboretum.

Riess: You joined because you were assured that these people were interested in looking at plant material rather than making a social event out of it.

Domoto: Yes, right.

Riess: I know that you eventually were president, and honored many times. Were you one of the more active presenters of plant material?

Domoto: Well, I would bring what I had or was able to get that might be of interest to them at the time.

Riess: You're a professional. Were there many other professional people in Cal Hort then?

Domoto: Yes, there were some that were, but not too many of them were interested in plant material in general. Mr. Clarke was. I remember him. And then others in larger nurseries, around the Bay Area especially, they might have a salesman or somebody in the group that was interested in plant material that would attend

pretty regularly. But as far as the owners themselves, they weren't that much interested in that, I don't think.

Riess: What did you get out of the organization?

Domoto: Talks were given at the meetings by specialty people, and some meetings, the talks were very good, and others were dry. But one part of the Cal Hort Society meeting that I enjoyed was, everyone that was attending would bring something that was of interest in their garden at the time of each meeting. And the committee would pick out maybe half a dozen or a dozen of the items that were brought in for discussion from the stage. Quite often things that were not in common trade would be discussed and it interested me.

Riess: It sounds lively.

Domoto: It was. What you're really doing is eliminating the social gatherer to those that are real plant--dirt gardeners. Someone might bring in--his hobby might be African violets, and of course they have their own special shows, but they could put on a good demonstration for the general membership.

Riess: It appealed to your general interest in floriculture?

Domoto: Yes. And the different members of the society had certain interests, and I got to know them. There was Eric Walther of Golden Gate Park. He was the botanist there under John McLaren. He more or less took charge of new plants and things in Golden Gate Park.

Riess: Tell me more about him.

Domoto: Personality-wise, Eric I'd say was not very sociable. But he could talk on certain plants for a long time to someone who he knew was really interested. He was of German descent and his language was hard to understand, unless you already knew what he was talking about.

Victor Reiter

Riess: How about Victor Reiter?

Domoto: Yes, Victor Reiter was very prominent, very active. And he was more patient with the novice than Eric was, I'd say.

Riess: What kind of material was he [Reiter] working with?

Domoto: He was mostly in, I think, herbaceous type of plants, but he was a good plantsman. He liked plants. He introduced several plants at that time. Quite active, one of the more active members of the Cal Hort.

Riess: I've heard that he was generous in giving away plant material.

Domoto: No, if he felt the person would really take a plant and propagate it, and get it disseminated, he wouldn't hesitate giving you cuttings off of a rare plant even.

Riess: I talked to Carla [Mrs. Victor] Reiter on the phone. She said when she looks into her garden she sees a wall covered with Clematis armandii which has a history that involves you?

Domoto: I think the one she had was a cultivar of armandii, and I think I got that from the Blake Garden. It was a pink form of armandii. Armandii is white, pure white, and I think Victor [Reiter] had some of the regular white in the yard and he wanted the pink. At one of the Cal Hort Society meetings, not Mrs. Blake, but Miss Symmes brought a spray in. I think that was the one I was able to get some cuttings from, and I was able to grow them. And when I got them started I gave Victor one to plant out.

Riess: To get the cuttings, did you call on Miss Symmes?

Domoto: I don't remember exactly how. Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes would come out to buy some things over here. I think she brought those cuttings to me.

Other Members

Riess: Now, Cal Hort Society you had no hesitation in joining, whereas with other groups you thought twice about whether you as a Japanese American wanted to be part of it. There were no issues of that?

Domoto: I don't think in Cal Hort, because we weren't interested in the people, we were more interested in what they were doing in plants. I think that was the main idea behind it, and naturally those were the kinds of people that came.

Riess: Once you knew those people, once you joined those groups, then did they end up coming out to your nursery?

Domoto: Oh, some did if they were interested, but I didn't care whether they did or not. I went for my own personal reasons, to see what was being grown, and what was being shown.

In those days there was Victor Reiter, and down on the Peninsula there was Frank Reinelt.

Riess: Was he begonias?

Domoto: Begonias, and delphiniums. He was a hybridizer. Mostly I guess he made his name with two or three varieties of delphiniums.

Riess: When you came back after the war, you rejoined Cal Hort Society? As actively?

Domoto: I was as active as I had time to be. Most of the work of Cal Hort was at meetings, once a month or so.

Riess: Are you a member of the Camellia Society?

Domoto: Yes, that was the Northern California Camellia Society.

Riess: And did they have meetings that were sharing information also?

Domoto: Yes. They'd have the annual camellia show; that was the main thing. And in between they'd talk about growing, and sharing. Most of the time, actually, it was more of a camellia flower show, like the dahlia shows, gladiolus shows. When they were in blossom they would show for prizes.

Maybe once or twice a year the meeting would be one of the more experienced amateur collectors who would show the newcomers about how to graft or something, instructional. But most of the time, they were just regular meetings, discussing. That's about it.

Riess: It sounds like the Cal Hort Society would be a more stimulating group.

Domoto: Well, it was more of a varied group. It wasn't a specialty group like the Camellia Society or the Rhododendron Society, or all these other specialty societies. We had members of all of those different societies coming to the Cal Hort meetings.

Another young fellow at that time, who started at Strybing, was Ernest Wertheim. He was starting out as a landscape man at that time, and he made his name later as a designer for garden centers. He got his start out here doing that, and from there he designed several garden centers back East. Instead of going into

general landscaping--he was doing general landscaping--he's gone into that line of work.

Riess: How about Sydney Mitchell?

Domoto: He was in iris. And then right next door to his [Mitchell's] garden was Carl Sahlbach, who was gladiolus.

Riess: Marshall Olbrich and Lester Hawkins, they had a place up in Occidental, Western Hills Nursery?

Domoto: Yes. They were newcomers as far as the--. They might have been in the business before, but I got to know them later from the Hort Society meetings. I forgot what specialty they were in, but each one had a specialty, and they used to come to meetings and discuss things.

About "Forgetting Race or Color"

Riess: It's a democratic world out there, the flower world?

Domoto: If you're really truly interested, you forget who is selling, and you go to the source, and you get what you can. You forget about race or color. Racism--. You might hate having to go to him, but if he has something you want, you're going to go to him. That's the way I felt. And then in the interim, since it's the material that they're interested in, there is common interest, they get talking about it, and you find out, "Oh, he's not such a bad guy to talk with."

When you are out working with plants and flowers, you can't have hate in your heart when you're doing that. You go out there because you have been up against the disagreeable part of your daily life, and you might go out in the garden and then forget yourself while you work in the garden.

Riess: And there's something about sharing the experience. People choose to share the experience of gardening.

Domoto: That's because you run up against problems at first, and then you have to go to somebody else that might know something more about it. Then you find that the ability to help somebody having a problem, it kind of gives you a boost. Not just the hard part of the gardening, but you think, "Well, here's something that I can give somebody else, too."

It's a slow process, but if more people would have more interest in gardens, there would probably be less hatred. But the chances of gardening gets less and less. As it's more crowded, there's no place for gardens. You have to change the type of gardening, and even the types of trees that we grow now, that the nurseries handle. And the shrubs have changed over the years.

Way back in one period--I guess it was along in the fifteens when the veronicas, all different varieties of veronicas, they came from Australia. And then they had the pyracantha and cotoneaster era. And then they went by. And then later we got into more or less the shade tree, the street-tree planting era.

W. B. Clarke. Lilacs

Domoto: Then we got into changing the garden plants from the pyracantha, especially when they started to get blight, and we got into the flowering peaches and the flowering cherries, that era. And then Clarke, with his lilacs that were suited for California conditions.

Riess: You mean the ceanothus or do you mean true lilacs?

Domoto: True lilacs. The ceanothus, I think, were mostly--I think there was someone in southern California who started to work with natives, and in this area here, it could have been Saratoga Hort that got the public interested, Ray Hartman and the Native Plant Society.

Riess: In southern California, was it Lee Lenz? Do you know Lee Lenz of Rancho Santa Ana?

Domoto: Rancho Santa Ana was more recent. This was some other--I can't think of the name now.

There was a garden designer in San Diego, Mrs. Sessions. And [Florence] Yock in the Pasadena area. And then there was Theodore Payne in native plants in the L.A. area.

Riess: Were Clarke's lilacs suited for California conditions?

Domoto: Yes. He hybridized lilacs that were more suitable for conditions out here.

Riess: You still see very few lilacs in California gardens.

Domoto: Those things take a long time to really get going, and unfortunately, when Clarke's nursery ended up that was probably-- nobody was growing the lilacs. Because the only ones that really were interested were the Easterners who had migrated to California to retire, and they were homesick for the lilacs.

Riess: That's right. That probably spurs a lot of effort on the part of Western nurserymen, to offer these favorite Eastern plants.

Domoto: Nostalgia for the home plants.

Riess: That must have been one of the virtues of Sunset magazine, that it instructed people from the East Coast about what was really going to grow on the West Coast.

Domoto: I don't think it was so much the idea of that as it was to try to introduce the plants that were being grown in California, California conditions. They were trying to sell California.

Riess: That's what I mean, that a person from the East Coast could become interested in what were the possibilities here, and stop worrying about the things they couldn't get.

Domoto: Yes, see what was being grown in this area here, or information about out here.

Another one trying to adapt plants suitable for out here was Dr. [Carl] Laemerts, who was breeding and hybridizing for Del Amo Nursery. He introduced two or three varieties of lilac that would flower in southern California. He also introduced two or three varieties of heptospirnum. He later was living in the Santa Cruz area.

The Bonsai Pace of Life

Riess: Don't you think a lot of the satisfaction of gardening is the physical digging in the garden?

Domoto: Sure. The thing is that when you're out there, you forget your other ailments and so forth.

Riess: As far as not having enough room for a garden, isn't bonsai a substitute?

Domoto: It's surprising the number of bonsai societies that are being formed, all over. It's a phase of horticulture that we go

through, and bonsai of course has been a form that's been in the Orient for all these many centuries. And we as Occidentals, our pace of life is much faster.

Whether we can slow down to the point where we can really put the time into bonsai as such, nothing will change. But if they get engrossed into it enough, they'll find that while they're working at it, they can forget about everything else. Like when you go to work in the garden or something, after a time you forget whatever troubles you have.

Riess: You've grown up in this country. Do you think you live like an Occidental, that you live a speeded-up life?

Domoto: It's been a hybrid type of life. But fortunately, in my contacts I'm able to meet with people of other races, too, and had their reaction; if I got to know them real well, they would open up and tell me how they felt.

My only reaction to the Orient is what I learned from my parents, or people that have come from there, or, far less, from what I read or hear. I don't know Japan. I don't even know what it looks like.

Riess: I'm thinking about where you might have diverged from your father's beliefs, his sense of life, or afterlife?

Domoto: I remember a remark he made in talking with somebody when they asked him, "When do you expect to see that plant in bloom again?" And he answered that he would be able to look down and see. I remember as a youngster, he said, "When I get to be forty-eight, I'm going to retire and do what I want." Forty-eight came and went, and it wasn't until he lost the property--the nursery went bankrupt--[that he stopped working]. Then he was sick, and he died in relocation center.

Riess: When he said he would do what he wanted, would he have worked with bonsai?

Domoto: I don't know. He might have. During the time that he was active, I don't think that he really had time to work with anything, especially along the plant breeding or anything like that, propagating commercially. But since his earliest start was breeding chrysanthemum seeds, I've often wondered what he would have done if he had leisure time enough to go into it. When I started planting my tree peonies, he was very interested in that. It might be that he might have been interested along that line. But I never knew.

XIV DOMOTO FAMILY

Japanese Names

[Interview 7: September 16, 1992] ##

Riess: One of the things I want to go through briefly with you is the names of your siblings. First of all, boys' names end with "i" and girls' names end with "o"? Is that the rule?

Domoto: I don't know. It might be, and that's a part I never paid much attention to. Although in my family, of course, my first name ends in "i", and my brother's is "i" too. And all the female members all have a "ko" on the end. And a "ko", the symbol, is "child," I guess, translated--I don't know the exact translation. But later, most of the sisters just used the first part of their name, full name.

Riess: Like your sister in Berkeley calls herself Waka?

Domoto: Yes, her full name is Wakako. But she just calls herself Waka.

You might check with someone that's more familiar with Japanese language to find out the--not necessarily language, but someone that knows the hieroglyphics of names and the customs.

Riess: Some of your friends refer to you as "Toich."

Domoto: Yes. It's supposed to be To-ichi. "To" is ten and "ichi" is one. They picked that because I was born on the eleventh. That's the common interpretation. But my full name in the Chinese hieroglyphics has a different meaning altogether. I think it's supposed to be someone that is a pacifier, or something like that.

Riess: Sonoko Riusake--this was your next sister?

Domoto: Yes, my next sister.

Riess: And what about her?

Domoto: The first three sisters, they all graduated from Mills. She lived in Santa Barbara. She's passed away now, too.

The next one, second girl, was Kae.

Riess: Kae. She's the one who went back to Tokyo at wartime?

Domoto: Yes. She's back there now.

Riess: And Imako?

Domoto: Imako has passed away already.

Riess: Then you had a brother who died in infancy, Goichi. I wonder what his name meant?

Domoto: "Go" to me means five, and I think he'd be the fifth one.

Riess: But "ichi" means one, though?

Domoto: One, yes.

Riess: [laughs] That's very literal.

And Tokuko is the sister you went to Livingston to stay with?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Is that family still there? After the internment did they return to the Livingston area?

Domoto: They came back to Livingston, and they still own the property there. Both the sons are gone. Their daughters are still living. In fact, two of them are in the Bay Area. The Kishi family is one of the group of the Livingston colony.

Riess: The Yamato colony?

Domoto: Yamato colony.

Riess: Yes, I was reading about that.

Domoto: And I think I told you the reason I left the nursery here when we were ordered to evacuate from the Zone 1, I figured that that being a Christian colony, it would be probably the last--and it

being in the interior, too--it would be the last of the group that they would have to evacuate. But the funny part was, we had to go into the assembly center the day before the Bay Area did.

Riess: That's interesting that you had faith that being a Christian meant that one would be considered less Japanese, or something like that, and therefore less threatening?

Domoto: I think they thought the Japanese, most of them were either strong Buddhists or Shintoists. Mostly they'd think they were Buddhists, as against the Christian. It's like the Mohammedan and the Christian religion; there always was that friction there, that thought that unless you were a Christian, you were no good, that feeling.

Who's Who, Issei

Domoto: My father used to say that all religion was was big business. If you can get your man to be a Christian or a Buddhist or whatever, you're a salesman. And he always used to say, "Religion, all it is is just big business."

Riess: Do you think that came from his experience in Japan?

Domoto: I don't know how, but he used to make that remark to some people when they sat and talked about religion sometimes. And he said, "Oh, religion."

Riess: "Big business."

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: One of his brothers became a priest.

Domoto: Yes. Well, he never was too good a priest.

Riess: And took another name, Shuho Sawada.

Domoto: Yes. He came to California and later worked in my father's nursery. But what I understand sub rosa is that he was kicked out of the ministry because he wasn't too good of a minister.
[laughter]

In the nursery in Oakland he used to raise pigs and chickens and things--self-sufficient in a way--although he would come and eat with the family, or the workers at the time. But he used to

be more agricultural in what he was doing. I remember he had a couple of pigs around there, and he would have a pig slaughter and do all the things.

I used to like his cooking as a youngster. I'd go by and he'd take it in his fingers and give it to me. We had a couple, and she, the lady, her name was Senda, she was very immaculate and very clean. And oh, she used to hate that. "Oh, that dirty guy!"

Riess: He didn't eat with the family, then?

Domoto: Once in a while, he'd come and eat. Most of the time, he was just like a hermit. I guess he used to meditate or whatever, I don't know. But he had this one side of the nursery there where he used to do that.

Riess: Your father's home would be open to his younger brothers to come?

Domoto: Well, I think that as they got older, and Dad had started, it seemed to be a stepping stone or something for them to come. Takanoshin, or Frank, the older brother, and my dad were the two that came together to the U.S. And then the other one, Motonoshin, or Henry, was the next brother.

Riess: The next brother to come, or the next brother in age?

Domoto: In age. As they got a certain age, they used to come.

Riess: In the genealogy, the first brother is Kichinoshin.

Domoto: Yes. He never came to the U.S. He always stayed in Japan. He was referred to as--I think they used to call him Kaichi, something like that. I'm not sure. But he was the oldest one. I never knew him, but he was the oldest brother. And then Takanoshin, or Frank, was the next one, and then my father.

Riess: And then the priest, Shuho?

Domoto: Yes, Shuho. I think his English nickname was Joe.

Riess: And then the next one is Motonoshin?

Domoto: Yes, that would be Henry. He and my father were really the Domoto Brothers, as far as the industry was concerned.

Riess: And then the next one is Mitsunoshin.

Domoto: Yes. Harry. And he was the youngest of the group that came. He came and started to go into the flower market--not the market, but

selling the flowers. And then he was married, and soon after marriage, they went to Japan, because he had developed tuberculosis, and they decided it was better for him to go back to Japan. His wife was a sister of Takanoshin's wife. They were related that way.

Who's Who. Nisei

Riess: You said that the three older sisters [Sonoko, Kaeko, Emako] went to Mills. How about Tokuko and Wakako?

Domoto: Well, Tok--that's what we called her--she felt that she didn't have the intelligence to go to college, and my father said that his aim was to put all the kids through school. But after that, he said, what they did, he wasn't able to foresee what they would do. She said, "Well"--I forgot what, but at that time they thought the first three had cost them so much to send them to college, so she said, "If it's the same, I'd just as soon get that much fund given to me, and [I decide] what I do with it." That would be her legacy.

Then instead of going to college she went to the--what's the fine arts school in Berkeley?

Riess: The California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland?

Domoto: Yes, in Oakland. She went there. And I don't know exactly what art she took, but that's where she went. And she was satisfied with that path for life.

Riess: And Wakako?

Domoto: Waka, she went to Stanford for a while, and that was the beginning of the Depression. The funds ran out, so Waka and my brother Kan [Kaneji] started to go--instead of trying to--. I know Kan never finished. I don't think Waka finished either. Then the war came along, so then we were evacuated.

Riess: And then there are Hanako and Masuko and Masako. And Yuri and Hanako--five more girls! [The ninth child, Hanako, died; the thirteenth child was also named Hanako.]

Domoto: Yuri is the only survivor. The others all passed away. Yuri is half of a twin. She's still alive and back East.

Riess: She's in Rochester, New York, where Kan is also?

Domoto: Yes. Kan is the landscape architect, and Yuri was in social service work for a long time. She was partly that in California before we evacuated. So she was in that until she retired about a couple of years ago. After the evacuation, they stayed there back East, instead of coming out here.

Waka, I think after Amache they went out--. I didn't know that, but she mentioned some time back that she'd worked for the office of the governor of Colorado at that time.

Riess: During the camp period?

Domoto: Right after camp, yes. And just this last year, she made a trip back there. They either had a memorial or something for the governor, so she went back for that.

She is very modest and never said much about it. She said she went to Colorado to visit the relocation center, and she said while she was there, several of the old evacuees came back for sort of a reunion there. She said she went up to Colorado where they had sort of a reunion in Denver. She said the reason she went back--she didn't go back for the relocation center reunion, but because it was a memorial or something for the governor that had passed away. Then I found out that she had worked for him in the office there.

She never married. During the Depression and so forth, the older ones were married, and that's why it more or less became her duty to--not duty, but she took it upon herself to take care of my dad.

Riess: And those other sisters, they died very young?

Domoto: Yes. The others, either accidents or otherwise--flu. Part of it was the flu epidemic. I think most all of them died in infancy; they never reached more than about two or three years.

Riess: Did that have a kind of a tragic feeling, all of this death of young children?

Domoto: I don't think so, because there were so many in the family. If they passed away or died while they were quite young, at birth or soon after birth, I don't think we were old enough to really realize too much.

Yuri's twin--. We used to think how nice to have twins. But then she [Hanako] died. I think it was about the time of the flu epidemic that she passed away. As I see it now, it was kind of fortunate, because the nurse that was carrying her happened to

fall, and we think the baby had hit part of her head, and I know from feeding her, she would always kind of--[Domoto grimaces]

Riess: Her face was twisted.

Domoto: Twisted, yes, and trying to feed--. Whereas Yuri, she smiled and would be very sociable. [Her twin would] try hard to do something but couldn't. I never knew why, but afterwards I found out that the nurse who was carrying her had fallen, and she was hurt. When she tripped and fell with the baby, she was trying her best not to get [her] hurt, but evidently she must have hit some part of the head.

Riess: So she was damaged.

Domoto: So she was damaged; she wasn't normal. I never realized just how bad it was. I kind of remember the way she used to try to talk, twisted her mouth--the little things that stuck in my mind. I think that's what it was.

Riess: Your mother did have some help? There was a nurse around?

Domoto: Oh, yes. With that many siblings coming almost yearly along the line, why, we had a servant in the house that would help with the housework. Then they used to have someone do the cooking, too.

When Waka, of course, was a much younger child, and when those two nurses were assigned to take care of the family, because the whole family was down with the flu, this one colored woman came in then, and Waka kind of shied away from her. Later, once she got to know her real well, the nurse used to call her "the sunshine girl."

The other nurse who came out then, she was white. She found our wine cellar. The colored woman, she was looking around for her to help and she didn't find her, she was dead drunk down in the basement. [laughter] So we needed to get somebody else, but she said, "No, you don't need a nurse. All you need is a good cook." And she took her white smock off, put on a kitchen apron, started to do the cooking for us. She took over the whole thing. She said, "You don't need a nurse, all you need is somebody to put some good food in you."

Riess: Your whole family, mother and father, were hit by the flu?

Domoto: Oh, yes. I got it first, and I got well the quickest. I had learned a little bit about how to cook the rice, so for a while I tried to cook for the family, because nobody else--everybody was afraid to go anywhere near where they had flu.

My uncle's family was running the nursery, but from a different house, possibly about not more than two blocks away. Our family went down first with the flu. So we asked him, "Would you just cook the rice and bring it over, just leave it by the door if you want. Don't even have to come in the house." But they were afraid to do that even.

Then my mother told me how to try to cook the rice, so I was cooking for a while, just rice for the family. There wasn't much else that I could prepare. And that's when this colored--I think her name was Cook--she just came in and put on the apron. I cooked the rice, but she cooked all the other things that would have to go with it to nourish the rest of us.

Riess: Well, that's quite a memory.

Domoto: And I think that [having known that black nurse, Cook] partly might be the reason that when I went to the University of Illinois, instead of going to the International House to live, I joined the Cosmopolitan Club. That club was very small, but had really cosmopolitan--different nationalities. Later on, for two and a half years, I guess, I was president there.

Good Family Life

Riess: I was reading in the pages that you gave me from the flower market book a description of life for a typical Japanese flower-market family. Your family does not sound typical.

Domoto: No. We were probably better fixed, financial income. Thinking now, my dad and mother both had a little different philosophies. Although neither one of them had any higher education, their idea was to have a good family life.

Riess: And so you did not get up before dawn to do the day's chores?

Domoto: No. We never had to do anything of that type there. In fact, education and family life were the main things. As we got older, we all had to do--the girls all had to do part of the household duties. They each had to keep their room or rooms together clean, and put the laundry in--like that.

Riess: And what did the boys have to do?

Domoto: Well, boys--I was the only son. By the time Kan came along, he was ten years later. So it's a different lifestyle. He wasn't

old enough to do anything along the nursery. I always used to putter around the nursery, doing things around the nursery, mechanical or otherwise.



American Camellia Society meeting in the Bay Area, 1949. Toichi Domoto says he enjoyed talking with Mr. Sawada, "an Oriental face with a southern drawl." Mr. Sawada and his son were camellia growers, although originally the father had come to Texas to farm rice.

XV OTHER GROWERS

Japanese Families

Riess: Another thing I read, in the flower market book, is that your family was the first Japanese family to buy land for agricultural purposes in the United States.

Domoto: I don't know about the United States, but around the Bay Area, I guess they were about the first ones that started buying property, in Oakland.

Riess: And the flower market book says--probably they learned this from you, this quote that I want to read--"Many of California's most prominent flower growers got their start in the trade by working for the Domotos, including the Maedas, Nabetas, T. Honda, Enomoto, Korematsu, and Rihitsu Shibuya. The Caucasian growers nicknamed the place 'Domoto College.'"

Is this what you told the interviewer?

Domoto: Yes, it's like for quite a while they used to call California Nursery the college mostly for Caucasian nurserymen. Not the Roeding family, but the owner before the Roedings.

Riess: You referred in an earlier interview to the Japanese sons who would come over. Is this what you're referring to here?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: You and I haven't talked about the other Japanese families, but of course, they keep coming up in later history of the nursery trade. What was the Domoto family involvement with these other families, like the Sugawaras and some of the big nursery names, Nakagawa, Uenaka--were these people who were part of your life?

Domoto: Uenaka is one of the second group.

Riess: Are they a new generation?

Domoto: A new generation, yes.

Riess: But were they Issei?

Domoto: Yes. I think they were Issei.

##

Riess: So that list I was reading from the flower market book was the first generation group?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: And did they go on to prominence?

Domoto: Oh, yes. They all had their own nurseries, like Enamoto went into shipping. He had a nursery, and Bill Enamoto was quite active. That would be probably his son.

Riess: Where was their nursery?

Domoto: In Redwood City. Redwood City and Belmont is where several of the growers went when they started out. Mostly [they went] into chrysanthemums. The Maedas and Nabetas, they were in the Richmond District. In those days it was called Stege, and that's where the greenhouses are still there. And the Sakai family.

Riess: And Adachi?

Domoto: Adachi, they had their start--. Their whole group more or less were in a certain small area, where the nurseries--some were adjoining nurseries. See, Adachi florist and nursery--now it would be second generation, or maybe even a third generation growing in the nursery now. But the original Adachi nursery was one of the pioneers that came from Japan. I don't know when they came, but I know that many of them worked for my dad.

Riess: Did you maintain ties with those people? What's been your relationship with these other families of nurserymen?

Domoto: I knew of them by name, and I knew them from when they used to come, because I guess they felt--. At least once a year or so, or more often, they'd come to visit Dad. I guess there were maybe some others that worked for him too, but the ones that seemed to be the closest, I remember, working with my dad, they're the ones

that made the success in the business afterwards. Like the Shibuya family.

Flower Market. Specialization and Standardization

- Riess: You said the ones that were closest to your dad were more successful. As if they had really learned something?
- Domoto: Had either learned or else they probably had more drive, and that's the way. They probably learned from my dad too. But most of them, like the Shibuyas, he went into growing chrysanthemums, and then some of the others were in roses, rose-growing or cut-flower growing. Mostly cut-flower side. And then some of the others were in outdoor plants and things.
- Riess: It sounds like you're saying that there was a conscious effort not to compete?
- Domoto: No, I don't think there was that. I think everyone had a drive to excel in what they were doing.
- Riess: They would wish to specialize because that would be how they could excel?
- Domoto: Yes. And then there were those that were just good growers, just growing what somebody had introduced and kept regrowing, and got to be good growers, they made a success, too.

But the ones I know, like Mr. Shibuya, he was interested in improving the chrysanthemum by plant breeding. In fact, I think he has a book he's written about breeding chrysanthemums, and some of them are patented. Before they were patented, in the flower markets someone used to steal the cuttings and grow the ones that he had patented. In other words [before patenting], he was getting little advantage in the market by producing something that the other fellows didn't have.

Also in the flower market in those days there was no standard about how many flowers or stems should be in a bunch. I know Mr. Goepner, who was manager, president, of Podesta Baldocchi in San Francisco, Edward Goepner, he was talking to me. "One season a year," he said, "You make the bunch," and another season, when you're shorter, he says, "You have a child or somebody make the bunch." In other words, there was no uniform standard of how many stems had to be in a bunch.

Actually the standardization of bunches, as far as the sizes of pompon mums was concerned, didn't come until much later, I think with the chrysanthemum association, after the war period, when grades and standards started to be the thing.

Riess: Grades and standards?

Domoto: Grades and standards law, yes. That referred not just to the cut flowers but to pot plants and all the others.

Riess: Were the grades and standards instituted by the nursery associations?

Domoto: I think it was the era when everything had to be standardized. It was federal, and then came on down to the state level and so forth. Like in California we adopted certain standards. I knew more of the plant side, but the cut flower side surely-- In order to compete with Eastern markets, they had to make standard bunches, so when the commission house or whoever was ordering back east, if they ordered ten bunches, they'd know they'd get ten bunches, because they'd order for a certain occasion, and if the bunches come too small, they won't have enough to do the job.

Riess: "Bunch" is a wonderful word. But what is a bunch?

Domoto: Oh, it used to be anything, whatever you could hold in a hand, and if it looked good, why that--until the grades and standards came in, and then they had so many stems, and then they also correlated stem length with weight.

Just like your vegetable bunches. Now with spinach, you buy it by the pound, but in the old days you'd buy a bunch of spinach, a bunch of carrots, and it always would vary. Sometimes if the carrots were big, you'd only have a few. If they're small, you have more carrots. I think that's all been standardized now too. And fruit's the same. They've come a long way in standardization.

Riess: So Sugawara?

Domoto: Pete Sugawara, as I knew him, he had the Montebello Nursery. He's retired now.

Growers and Grower Groups

Riess: I could imagine that in your business you would never have to speak to anyone other than Japanese Americans. It was a complete world of Japanese-American nurserymen.

Domoto: Most of them, it was more by what they were growing. The Japanese group, especially around the Bay Area--I don't know about southern California--but around the Bay Area I think about the first ones to form sort of a group were the chrysanthemum growers. And then they had a man from Livingston that was in charge of operating the co-op for them, came to San Francisco to form the Chrysanthemum Growers Association.

Riess: And that would cut across race?

Domoto: Yes. And I don't think they ever had any group of rose growers. But the bedding plant people, they had their own group. At first, I guess the bedding plant growers were mostly Japanese. But there were others; whoever was growing bedding plants became members of the association. I think as I look back it was more because they were forced to do so under the grades and standards, when the law was being formulated. They had to have everybody in that group there.

Riess: That's interesting. What groups did you have to belong to in those terms?

Domoto: My connection with the cut flower side was very limited, because I was more interested in the nursery side.

Riess: Did you organize a camellia growers group?

Domoto: As far as setting prices goes, it was more or less set by demand, and the better plants, the better price. The Camellia Society, like the African Violet Society or the Rose Society, you'd join as a member if you wanted to. But the Camellia Society, they were both growers and amateurs together.

Riess: It wasn't a marketing group?

Domoto: Marketing, no. Marketing I think was pretty much left to each one, competitive. The first group, the Central California Nurserymen's Association, that was mainly for the betterment of the trade, in making uniform the hours of business, standards like that.

Riess: That book, 2nd Time Around, that I've quoted a couple of times before, says that retailers in central and northern California depended on southern California wholesalers. They went to southern California, and someone named Alfred Peterson took them around for two or three days.

Domoto: Yes, that was on an individual basis. Peterson was actually a plant broker, and he made trips up to the Bay Area to different nurseries to sell plants, take orders.

Riess: Yes, and that I think we've talked about.

And on the formation of the Central California Nursery Association, it says that George Roeding, Jr., president of the California Nursery Company, got together with others on pricing and credit and deliveries, and they were disturbed about competition. Walter Hoff at West Coast Nursery was disturbed by competition from the UC Landscape Architecture Department, so they decided that they needed to get organized, and they formed the Central California Nurserymen's Association. It met in Niles, at the Florence Restaurant.

Do you remember that? And going to the Florence Restaurant?

Domoto: That used to be one of the favorite spots.

Southern California Nurseries

Domoto: I guess the formation of the California Association of Nurserymen was because of economics.

Riess: This was mid-thirties.

Domoto: Even the history of the California Association of Nurserymen as such--. The southern California nurseries that I remember, and the groups down there, they would always want to go big. The Central California group as such never had any really big growers. They were all small retailers or small growers, doing their business in a small way. They were never trying to be too big. During the Depression, our Central California chapter, we were kept active all the way through, whereas southern California for a long time, they had the name down there but they weren't too active.

Then when things started to build up, and some of the nurseries got started down there, when our chapter would put in

say \$500, they'd put in \$1000, something like that. It was always big, blow-hard. [laughs] I used to think of them as Hollywood, with a false front. That was my impression of most of the southern California growers. The ones that did go large were mostly parts of a large subdivision that was being promoted by some wealthy person, and they would form a nursery of their own to grow plants for the subdivision.

And then at that time the ones that became very prominent in southern California, as nurseries, were like Paul Howard at Flowerland. He was one of three or four brothers there. He built one of the most, I'd say, pretentious of the retail nurseries in California at that time, because he had-- . He was fortunate that the piece of property that they had, the nursery, developed oil. The other brothers, they didn't, but he did. So he probably owned the first of the real fabulous nursery centers. [laughs] I know when he used to come up to get plants, and to talk to my dad, he used to come and he'd have a chauffeur. The others would be driving their own cars. He was in the society side down there.

The others that I know of that came up at that time--there was Monrovia Nursery, which is nationally known now. But at that time, he had a small nursery in Monrovia. He was just starting out, and he built his by really being a good nurseryman, a business operator.

Riess: What was his name?

Domoto: I'm not sure. But Howard Past, I think, was the first president of the Monrovia Nursery. Actually, really on a mass production of nursery stock in a very systematic way, I think Monrovia Nursery in southern California was the first.

Riess: You're saying they're ahead of the Bay Area?

Domoto: Yes, in mass production. Most of the Bay Area nurseries around, they were all small growers or small retailers. We all depended on southern California for the material to sell up here. And then, of course, there were a few that produced some of their own specialty, but there was never any real big wholesale growers in this area.

Exclusives?

Riess: Did a nurseryman up here try to establish exclusive rights to some source person at the other end?

Domoto: No. Most of the buying would be like some of the nurseries or some of the salesmen, someone from around here would go down there and bring things up for the nursery to sell up here.

Riess: But would it be within the rules of the game to contract to take absolutely all of a certain kind of pansy, so that no one else could offer them?

Domoto: No, I don't think there was anything like that. I would say the brokers that dealt with certain nurseries that grew stock down there would come around and sell it. In that respect, around the Bay Area, in California even, I'd say that W. B. Clarke was one of the prime nursery salesmen.

Riess: But it seems to me that one of the things he could either do or not do would be to insure that his customers up here would have an exclusive, or that there wouldn't be competition within Berkeley, that if you had three nurseries in Berkeley, that only one nursery in Berkeley would have a certain plant.

Domoto: No, I don't think there was any effort to confine stock to one nursery. It depended on the broker. If he said, "Well, I've got just so many plants--" He'd never tell us, but I think that's what happened. He'd have a grower, and he'd say, "I'll take this block." And then he would apportion the plants to the nurseries that he was selling to.

I don't think there was any effort to have an exclusive. I think exclusiveness came with the patent law, especially in the roses. The rose growers, of course, when they held a patent, they had to know how to distribute, and to see that only certain nurseries got that patented rose. But as far as any confined sales, I guess you might call it, it was not such a common thing in the nurseries.

Paul Doty. George Budgen. Herman Sandkuhle

Riess: That reminds me of another name, Doty. The Doty name goes back quite far in the nursery business.

Domoto: Not way back, but into the early days. I'd say right after probably War I, I guess. It used to be Doty and Doerner Company in Oregon. Paul Doty did the selling, and Doerner was, I guess, the grower. Paul decided to sell the northwest-grown plants to most of the California and southern California nurseries, they'd take the orders for northern-grown stock. Of course, he didn't

grow everything, but he was able to get their group up there to get the contract for certain crops of things to sell down here.

Riess: Things that grew well in Oregon he would market in southern California as well?

Domoto: Yes, but mostly in the central part. Only a few things would go down to southern California. But he used to travel around so that, like the California meetings, any association meeting, he would always try to attend.

At that time around the Bay Area here there were several of us, like Berkeley Horticulture, George Budgen, and Sunset Nursery, Herman Sandkuhle.

Riess: Sandkuhle?

Domoto: Herman's the son of one of the founders of what used to be Piedmont Nursery at one time. They came to be known as--they call it the Sunset Nursery.

Riess: Where was he from?

Domoto: I think he was German.

Riess: Did the German nurserymen have a different horticultural approach that you ever noticed? Different techniques?

Domoto: Yes, they grew different things. See, Sunset Nursery was formed mostly by gardeners at first. They would buy things like fertilizer in sort of a co-op deal. Bedding plants they would buy from one of the growers somewhere, so gardeners would be able to get the things in one place instead of having to shop all around. I think that was the basis of Sunset Nursery. And then later it got to be more individual, and after Herman--that would be the second generation, and the time I got to know him and their operation. Whereas my dad used to know his father, or father's partner. So they are actually going about two and three generations there.

Riess: Herman was your generation or your dad's generation?

Domoto: The original Sandkuhle started in my dad's generation, and Herman was younger, along with my age group, a little younger.

Pot Plant Growers

Riess: I think what I was asking--probably the answer is no, that's why you didn't answer my question exactly--is whether there were different growing techniques employed by someone who had a German training, a German background.

Domoto: Yes, I think as far as the different growers that my dad had, the pot-plant growers, especially the forced type of plants, a couple we used to have, they were of German descent, or they were German immigrants I'd say even, first-generation German. I think their education was along that line. Their experience was along that line. So when they came here, they went into [pot plant growing] instead of going into private gardeners. Some of them were good private gardeners, but the English ones that went into gardening, they seemed to have more of the training for estate work. That's my classification of different people.

Riess: Japanese would be the private gardeners, the English would be estate work, the Germans would be--

Domoto: Pot plant growing, the forced type of plants, flowering pot plants. Not all of them, but as a general rule. But they changed as things came along.

##

Riess: Who was Frank James?

Domoto: He had his nursery, James Nursery, on Foothill Boulevard, on about 84th, 85th Avenue and Foothill Boulevard where the high school is there now.

They and the Hayashis, and Dad, they were about the main pot plant growers around the Bay Area. Then later, the Italian growers, with the immigration, Geneva, Sunnydale came in, the next wave.

Riess: Geneva, Sunnydale?

Domoto: That nursery is gone now, but it used to be right near the Cow Palace in San Francisco. They were the first ones to--they were using Italian immigrants. That was I think a corporation, and Restani was president of the company.

Agriculture Commissioner. Inspectors

Riess: I'm going to mention some other names. Ray Hartman. Is he a nurseryman?

Domoto: Yes, I don't know how he got into the nursery, but as I knew him, he was the owner or operator of Leonard Coates' nursery in Santa Clara. I think it used to be Coates Nursery then, Leonard Coates, and then he [Hartman] became owner. And then also, Ray was quite active in politics. I think he was one of the presidents of the California Association at the time.

Riess: You mean in nursery business politics?

Domoto: Yes, nursery business. And I'm not sure, but I think he may have been one of the first of the agricultural commissioners for the county, when they started to have agricultural commissioners in the county.

Riess: Was he a good guy?

Domoto: Good politician.

Riess: [laughs] The agricultural commissioners are important to the nurserymen, because they either look sympathetically upon one, or not?

Domoto: I think in the beginning, most of them may have had some knowledge of entomology or that part of it. But most of that was a political job. Like the agricultural commissioner in Alameda County, there were others before that, but as I knew them, the first one they had was Fred Seulberger. He used to have a flower shop near 14th and Broadway, the Seulberger Florist.

Riess: That sounds like a conflict of interest right away.

Domoto: Sure. And like I say, when I report things, I might hurt somebody, I might say things, but this is history. And as history, things that may be against me or for me, I'll try to repeat it as I see it and as it was at the time.

His deputy inspector didn't know anything about bugs, and I think I told you before, came out to the nursery and condemned my father's whole greenhouse because he said it had a bunch of scale. He didn't know what the scale was, but he wouldn't say anything. I didn't know anything about it. We found out afterwards that we had some old Boston ferns, and the second-year fronds on there,

the spores on the back of the fronds, he thought they were scale, and he condemned that greenhouse. [laughs]

Riess: When you talked about that before, I was just attributing that to a kind of persecution of the Japanese.

Domoto: Well, that's ignorance on the part of the inspector.

Riess: So you think it was mostly ignorance.

Domoto: Ignorance on that part. But when we were shipping plants south, holiday plants, poinsettias, once a crate came back as condemned, and it hadn't even been opened. That was Seulberger, because he wasn't able to get what he wanted, because he was trying to exert this pressure as a means of getting what he wanted, without buying quantity. That was more or less I would say prejudice.

Saratoga Horticultural Foundation

Riess: Have you had any dealings with the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Have they propagated any of your material?

Domoto: They may have. I don't know whether they have or not. Actually, that was one of the good things that Ray Hartman did. I think probably during the war he formed this with several others--I don't know who the members were.

Riess: It started in 1951, actually. Dick Hildreth, Maunsell Van Rensselaer. Tell me what that organization signified for growers?

Domoto: Well, the idea was to try to introduce new things or find things that tested out to be disseminated to the nursery trade.

Riess: Where would they get their new things?

Domoto: Wherever they could find something like that. And then I think they were doing some breeding work themselves. But you see, plant breeding as such, unless you get into a certain line, is an expensive thing to do. Unless you have the income, or things coming along, you're not going to be able to continue it. And it depends on who's in charge of the work.

I think one of the first things that they kind of developed was one of the shade trees--I forgot which; they were going more along the lines of some of the shade trees. And then also they had started out to try to get some of the native plant material to introduce to the horticulture trade. But over the years, a few of the things, like the selection of liquid amber, and then naming the selections of some of the trees, magnolias, especially street trees.

I don't know what else they were working on, but it always depends on who the main guiding light was there, what they were looking for. At one time I thought they had a good practical man there. He was--I can never remember the name--but he was from England, and he had started to get into certain types of trees that he thought would be of value in the California garden.

Riess: Was that Philip Browse?

Domoto: I think that's the name. Then he was called back to England. And I think he's head of one of the big gardens there, estate gardens or something, in charge over there. He was just getting started here at Saratoga Hort after they moved down from Saratoga to Morgan Hill.

Riess: How is Saratoga Hort financed?

Domoto: I think it was first started by donations, most of it.

Riess: From the nursery trade?

Domoto: Well, some from the nursery trade, and also from the private sector. That was the way it was started by Ray Hartman.

Riess: It sounds like a wonderful thing.

Domoto: The idea was very good. The only thing is to keep the finances up. And then also the idea was as they introduced the material that it would be patented, and it would pay a royalty to the nursery for that.

The idea was wonderful. Practical it wasn't, because if the thing was popular, to sell it in the quantity as we know it now, in order to bring profit back to the foundation, they would have to grow in big quantities. But as they were selecting, before they had enough plants to really make it profitable--.. In other words, they never had a good cost accountant, marketing director there.

Riess: Could they patent, and get the royalties?

Domoto: Oh, they would patent several things, but if somebody else had a plant almost as good, and they were producing it in competition, then even if it was thought to be good, unless they tried it out in the areas-- . And the nurseries, and the buying public, is not buying a plant, paying a premium price of a dollar more or so, in order to buy the same kind of a plant.

That's the case with the American Rose Society, where they had the All-America. That all started up, you see, where they were selecting the roses after being tested in different gardens, the number one rose, and that would be called the All-America.

Riess: And people are willing to pay that extra for a rose?

Domoto: If they pay a dollar and a half for a regular, they'd have to pay two and a half for a patented rose, just for a tag on there. But that tag had a meaning that that was a new type of a color or rose, better than those they had in the past. But if you get so you just made it All-America #2 just to make a sale on it, it wasn't so good.

Albert Wilson. Walter Hoff

Riess: I talked to Albert Wilson yesterday. I got him on the phone. He and you overlapped at Stanford. He said that you both studied with someone named Dr. Campbell.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: And that Dr. Campbell later came to visit you at this nursery.

Domoto: Yes. Dr. Campbell, he was almost semi-retired when we were there in '25. But he'd come to the nursery sometimes. I think my dad knew him, too.

Riess: And Albert?

Domoto: We were in the class together, in botany. I think Albert came to Stanford probably as a protege of Dr. Campbell.

Riess: And then he worked for Walter Hoff?

Domoto: Yes, he worked for Hoff either during or after graduation.

Walter Hoff was a landscape man, but his idea was--we used to call him the society landscape man.

Riess: You mean like Thomas Church?

Domoto: That's a good comparison, yes.

Riess: Was Walter Hoff trained in landscape architecture the way that Church had been trained?

Domoto: I think he was, because he was doing mostly landscaping. He was known as West Coast Landscaping. He and his partners would--I think he was the one who used to get the contracts to do the big landscape jobs.

Riess: Did he have a style, in the way that Thomas Church had a style?

Domoto: I don't remember so much, except I know that he would get the jobs pretty much. Like before West Coast got effective, McRorie-McLaren [in San Mateo, in the 1920s], they used to get the big jobs planting. That was because of the connection with McLaren in Golden Gate Park.

Riess: Walter Hoff had his own source of supply?

Domoto: Well, they grew some, but for most of the landscaping he would buy material from southern California, or wherever they had it, or he'd know ahead of time, if he'd get the job, he'd order so many plants to be delivered at such a time.

Albert Wilson has quite an interesting history. I think he has his own book of biography of his life, too.

Riess: Somebody asked me if I had read that, about his being in an orphanage.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: I haven't read it, but he sounds like quite an interesting character on the telephone.

Domoto: Yes. And I think if it wasn't for his voice he would have made a success in radio and TV, because he was one of the first to go on the radio, and I have been on programs with him, being interviewed by him. But his voice never--even now on I think Saturday morning at five o'clock when it comes on, it's a hard voice to listen to. It's sort of a guttural sound.

Whereas Norvel Gillespie--. They're about the same time. But Norvel had an easier approach, and his voice was--I don't think he was any better educated than Albert, but his voice on radio was smoother, easier. It wasn't so harsh on the ears. So

he came right up in the radio. And early when television started to come along, he got right up there. And then he went out.

Whereas Albert, he never got that far, although he's been with KGO for--like I say, he's one of the old-timers. I remember going once to the studio. In fact, I think I have some of the original scripts. On the program Albert would ask something and I would answer it. We'd read it off the script.

Riess: He would write out a script ahead of time, or the two of you would work on it?

Domoto: We worked together. He would ask me questions, and I would tell him, and then we would have it written out, my words and the answer. It was about a half-hour program. He'd ask, "How would you do this, how would you do that?" I would answer it. We'd keep to the script in order to be able to have it within the program time.

Riess: So they would be "how-to" programs, how to prune your camellias or something?

Domoto: Mostly. Yes, just like they do now. More or less seasonal.

Riess: Did you get paid to do that? I'm curious.

Domoto: I'm not quite sure. I just used to go over and do it. But Albert, I think he was being paid by the radio station.

As far as my interview with him, I don't think I would charge them anything. I would do it because I figured--I always thought, "Well, whatever is good for the industry would be good for me." Because most of the interview would be how I would grow a certain camellia or azalea or something, how to plant it, how to transplant it. Things that were seasonal for the time, but they were probably things that I would be growing.

Riess: So in a way, it's advertising.

Domoto: Yes, advertising.

XVI VALUES

Thoughts on "Going on My Own"

Riess: Speaking of advertising, you sent me a letter once about five years ago on a piece of absolutely wonderful paper. I was interested in everything about that piece of paper. It was illustrated with tree peonies. And down at the bottom it said, "Specialties: azaleas, camellias, double gerberas, magnolias, tree peonies." "Toichi Domoto Nursery."

Would you tell me about this piece of paper, what is it made of?

Domoto: It's wood.

Riess: Wood. Did you get it from Japan?

Domoto: It's a paper that--. The importing company after the war was importing different articles from Japan, and I saw that and I liked it, so I bought it. I still have a bunch of paper. It's wood. I don't know what kind of wood. The thing is, to get the printers to work on it, it's hard, unless they put it through a fast press, it used to tear.

Riess: I hope we can put a piece in each copy of the oral history. Do you have some still in your office?

Domoto: I may not have all the--I have some with that, but I have some plain, too. I don't know if I have enough envelopes left.

Riess: Well, I don't need the envelope.

Why did you call this the Toichi Domoto Nursery?

Domoto: You see, my father's place was Domoto Brothers, Inc. Then just about my last year in college, when I decided to go on my own, that was because the corporation--. My father and his brothers, they got along all right, but they had a difference of opinion. My mother, she's the one that probably suffered the most because of that part of the family deal. And she always said, "I want you to start out in the smallest way, but keep it separate."

And then of course, part of it was because of the Alien Land Law, because I wanted to keep myself clear of any groups that might be connected with the older generation. So this was a place of my own. I started out. So that's why I put my name as Toichi Domoto Nursery instead of Domoto Nursery.

The Domoto Brothers, Inc. went out in the Depression when the firm went bankrupt. That was during the Depression, when the banks foreclosed. The Central Bank in Oakland, which did most of the loaning for the Japanese nurseries around, I think was taken over by federal receiver. They foreclosed and the city of Oakland bought the property.

We tried to get another loan to pay that off, but we weren't able to. I asked Mr. Goepner and he talked to someone at the Bank of Italy and said if I had approached them earlier they probably would have. But once one bank has foreclosed, the others wouldn't touch it.

Riess: Did you actually ask?

Domoto: No, I stayed out of it.

Riess: Why did your mother suffer from all of these brothers being together?

Domoto: Partly I guess the difference in their style of living and so forth.

Riess: You mean like the priest brother with the pigs?

Domoto: He never bothered too much. But the older brother, Frank, he used to--anytime VIPs would come to San Francisco, he would be in the store over there, and dressed all the time, and he would always bring them over to see the nursery. And he would always try to give an impression that he was part of the nursery, and he never was. Actually, any connection with the nursery itself ended in 1906 after the earthquake. I think my father, with whatever funds he had, helped him get kind of restarted, in the importing and exporting business.

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But for a long time, the older brother always used to bring the VIPs over to the place, and give them the impression that he was the president of the company. So, when we had to incorporate, why naturally they had to divide shares to the shareholders. I think that's why the [bad] feeling--. In those days, anyone that came to the nursery, most of the time my family, Mother, had to get the reception, whatever things, tea or liquor or whatever, she'd have to get all the things together for them all the time. But her sister-in-law, she'd always be the person, you know.

Riess: The sister-in-law is Matsue?

Domoto: Matsue, yes.

Riess: And she would act the grand lady.

Domoto: Yes. My impression might be a little more biased that way, but at least I think it's always been that way. Even the article [in East Magazine, March-April, 1967] I think about Takanoshin Domoto, parts of it towards the end there are a little biased, but that was because his daughter was writing the article.

Plant Talk: Daphne Odora

Riess: One of the plants that Albert Wilson said you were a specialist in was wisteria.

Domoto: Actually, wisteria, I was growing it some, but probably my experience with those was importing varieties from Japan. But as far as marketing any quantity for sale, I think Walter Clarke, the Clarke Nursery, should be given the credit for that, because I think he grew more wisterias in California of all different types.

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Riess: Is Daphne [odora] considered an exotic?

Domoto: It was mainly sold because of the fragrance of the flower. My dad used to import it from Japan, and it used to come in a plant about a foot high, root ball. We would import it in the fall or winter months, and then we'd sell the plant as such, and then it would flower. But it doesn't thrive all over. It depends on the climate. Some places, they really got to be a big shrub. Other places, they would just flower that season and that would be the end of it.

Riess: Does it get to be a hard wood?

Domoto: I'd say more of a--really not real hard, they're more like a large herbaceous type of a plant. And it doesn't get too tall. It probably gets about maybe four feet at the most, and spreads.

There was one place up in north Berkeley or the Montclair area where I used to go to get cuttings. That plant used to be about six, seven feet wide, and about four feet tall.

Riess: I've never before heard you say that you would go to a place to get cuttings.

Domoto: Oh, yes. Like when camellias were in season, I would try to get varieties, new, other varieties, or some of the older varieties, to get propagating wood. I'd go anywhere around the Bay Area where they would have the flowers. Someone, say, would show at the camellia show, and if they had a variety that was popular, and I didn't have any plants, I'd try to see if I could get some cuttings from them.

Riess: And that was a kind of a gentleman's agreement, to do that?

Domoto: No, it was just an individual thing. Some people--human nature is funny--some people have something, they want to hoard it, they don't want to share it, but they like to show it off. And then others are very generous, overly generous. They like to have other people have it.

It used to hurt me sometimes, because they'd snip off great big branches for me, and that didn't do any good, because all I needed was the tips. But they'd say, "Oh, this needs pruning," and they'd just clip it off for me. But that's a difference in the human nature: those that want to share, and those that like to hoard and show. [laughs]

Riess: Was that another thing that drew people to Cal Hort meetings, the chance to see some plant that they could then own if they could have a little piece?

Domoto: I don't think that was--there may be some members that joined for that purpose, but I think Cal Hort as such, members, were interested in certain types of plant material, liked to get together and talk about it, or show off what they were growing in a group where you wouldn't have to have a bunch of people who were just there to try to cultivate somebody.

If there was any exchange, it was a matter of mutual interest. Some of the plants which used to come in there, they'd

say, "Well, I have a plant that size, and if anybody wants to propagate them, they can come get some cuttings off of it." That was kind of open to all. The member didn't have to do it, but most of the members were pretty open that way.

Riess: But the first source for finding new camellias for you would be the Camellia Society itself?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Tell me--a little sideline--how can I get more flowering on my Daphne [odora]? What could I feed it so that it would flower more?

Domoto: I never knew. [laughs] In the spring of the year when it would blossom, the blossoms were used as a cut flower, so I had a patch here, 100 by 50, and the plants were planted about four feet apart. In the spring when they came in blossom, I just cut them back and cut the branches, not big sprays but in a small bunch. They used to sell the blossoms tied-up in nosegays, to give away.

That was before we worried too much about soil, just this plain old heavy adobe here. I didn't even put any additive or anything. Native soil, though, because the orchards had been pulled out, and this was the first time [anything was in there]. But when you start trying to grow them in the pot and things, you find out how difficult it is. Rot and all the other things.

Riess: I won't worry about my plant. I'll just figure if it's doing well, I'm lucky.

Domoto: If it's been growing, and if you have it that long, I wouldn't change too much. The only thing, when it gets older, the twigs, the flowering stem gets very short. So if you want to get it a little longer, probably in the spring, right about the time it's flowering, you might give a not too strong but possibly a moderate nitrogen fertilizer. And then be sure to give plenty of water at that time, because that is when it's making the new growth, flowering for the next year.

And as far as cutting back, if you cut from the underside, this way, if you cut your big branch from the bottom side, and then it will fill down in here.

JACL

Riess: Did you join the Japanese American Citizens League, JACL?

Domoto: The JACL group I guess was more or less ten years younger than my age. When that started to be formed, my brother and sisters, they were active in the Hayward area in the JACL. I was never really active in it. I helped them with meetings and stuff, but never was an officer or anything. The only time I became an officer was after the war when we came back, when they wanted to reactivate the chapter here. They wanted me to take the presidency, so I think I took it for about a year or so. And then the younger ones in the area here, they took over.

Riess: Do you remember what the issues were that they were dealing with then. After the war, was it housing perhaps?

Domoto: Fair housing. That was probably the main thing, and then somewhat of a little bit on the land issue, but the main thing was people getting back here, trying to find places for them to live. Housing was the main thing.

The group in this area, they were living in the community meeting place in the Ashland area. It was turned into sort of a hostel for them, until they got a place to stay on their own. They were housed there. I think they had to provide their own food.

More on Land Law and Incorporation Issues

Riess: Was that the most active you were as in the Japanese-American issues at that time, or have you been active in other ways that I don't know about?

Domoto: The citizens' group was a younger one. The only one that happened right after the war was in regard to being recompensed for damages lost. That was more or less the group that has formed to try to get a more equitable reparation for losses.

Riess: And were you a leader in that?

Domoto: I wasn't the president. I was just one of the members of the board.

Riess: Because of your father having come earlier to this country than many of the Issei, that makes you a little bit older than the other Nisei. So did people look to you for leadership in these things?

Domoto: I would be asked, and certain things I would join. Others, I just felt that it was their problem. And since I was in between as far as age, I wasn't old enough one to be one of the older members, and yet too old to be in the same group with my brother who was ten years younger.

The younger group, in the beginning, the clubs were more for a social group, to form a social group, and I was not so much interested in the social side. My ideas I felt were probably most in keeping with the younger members of the group. I was neither fish nor fowl, neither one nor the other.

But that [my age] was why when the anti-Alien Land Law, the formation at that time, that meetings were held, I would be sitting in with the group, because the attorneys that we had to work with them spoke English, and wanted me to kind of listen in. And I was interested because I was a little older.

At the beginning of the Alien Land Law formation, I was old enough then to be of legal age so that I could buy land on my own, and several of the families around the nursery that had property already, that didn't have children of their own old enough to be a citizen, asked me if I could become a member of their corporation or whatever, so that they could have my name in there as an owner and it would be legal.

I said, "No." I just refused. I think I might hurt some people's feelings, but also--that was subterfuge, and anything of that type that wasn't quite right to me, I didn't like it.

Riess: That would have been such a confusion when that all needed to be sorted out.

Domoto: And then see, the confusion came because the people asked me--. They said there were these other young Nisei, but they didn't know all them or their family, and they wanted--they had confidence and trust in me. You hate to turn those down because you hurt their feelings, but I had to, because of my own preservation. And then the other feeling of not breaking the law.

Riess: You had attorneys' advice.

Domoto: As far as the legal part of it, it would be all right. But if it came to a point where it had to go to court on the thing, I would

have to say that I wasn't really a member of that group, I was just lending my name, that's all it was. There were several of my age group that did do that, and they were--at that time a lot of families already had purchased land before the Alien Land Law, and they became a part of another corporate name. They would be like Northern California Farm Corporation, and then Nursery One and Nursery Two, Nursery Three, as part of that corporation.

And then, in some of the cases, I found out that the ones that were forming that group, they weren't all honest. They'd say they had to report back as a group, and they were bleeding some of the members for their own greed. Most of those people are gone now, so it comes out.

Riess: Interesting, complicated.

Domoto: Like in anything else, it's human. There are those who are honest, those who are dishonest, and those who are in between.
[laughs]

Family Values, Home Training

Riess: The honesty. Tell me about your values, your moral system.

Domoto: Moral system? I think it's more or less the family. It's home training, I think.

Riess: Your family would have had a stronger moral sense than another Japanese family?

Domoto: I don't say that.

As far as the family was concerned, if you borrowed something, you tried to return it. And usually, in the old days, if you borrowed something you would return it and you always tried to return a little bit more--plus interest if you can. At least that was the way I was taught from my mother. So I think honesty.

And you talk about family values. It's not just the family, it's the person at the head of the family that would be the example. Just as a family instance, little things that youngsters remember, when we had a birthday party for members in my family, folks, we always tried to have whatever, and the guests, we would try to serve them first. Certain things like hash: hash in Japanese would be the mixed rice. We would always try to serve everybody equal, or the guests first.

I remember, my aunt always used to have this mixed rice, a nice bowl made into a mountain like, with the mixture on the outside. And when we would go there, she would always serve us from the bottom, me and my sisters. Whereas her family, the second to be served, she'd feed them from the top, and they'd get all the crust on the top, the good dressing. Little things like that you remember as a kid, you know.

That's happened in American society. Any family does the same thing. If they're entertaining a lot, they try to serve their best--. It looks like you're serving the guests first, but you're not. Like if you're carving a turkey, if you like the skin, you save that and put it aside, and you serve the other slices first, and then you serve the skin slice to the person who likes it. I've seen that happen right along. And that's not just Japanese; it's any family, depending on the person serving. The feeling of equality is not there. Get what you can, and the hell with the hindmost. [laughs]

The loss of family values like that, that's why we're having so much trouble now, social-wise. It's not a case of equality and giving. And it isn't a matter of race, nor of economic equality, because you can go to some of the poorest families--I've been with some--and they'll try to serve you the best that they have. You can go to the richest ones, and they're just the opposite. And yet they make you believe that they're being very gracious.

When you're younger, you may not say it, because you're not supposed to. But you feel it. And those things register in your mind.

Riess: I want to ask you a cliched question, but it sums up something. What do you feel was your most important achievement?

Domoto: [pauses] Having gotten along with my friends in life, and having gained their respect. I feel that more than anything else, human relations.

Riess: You could have said something about plants, growing things, but that's not what comes to mind?

Domoto: No. That's just what you do as an individual. And if it causes something that's growing or hybridizing to come out, that's good, that was just a personal thing. If it gave pleasure to somebody in the meantime, that's secondary. But the fact that I got to know certain people real well, intimately, so that regardless of their color or race or religion, I knew them as a person, I think that was--those are the two things that I really cherish more than anything else.

Riess: Do you think your father would have felt any of that?

Domoto: I think my father had a little bit of that, and probably my mother more so. She never tried to show it that way, but she was always very careful in trying to treat everyone equally.

Riess: Do you think you've passed that on to your children?

Domoto: I hope they have a portion of it. But you see, family life is different these days, so that they're more inclined to go their way. But the fact that my son and daughter, even though they're further away, still keep in constant contact with us, I think we've succeeded in that respect. Although we're separated by distance so that we're not as close as we were. But we have the telephone now.

Like my daughter [Marilyn Teruko Webb], and my sister. My sister [Wakako] is about nine years younger, and she's not married, she's living by herself. So I make it a point to call her, or she calls me, about once a week, just to chat about what we're doing, just family. Just say that we're still able to move around, and whatever ails us, we talk about it.

My daughter, we talk about different things. My granddaughter [Cristina] is coming, entering Stanford this fall, so she'll be close by but then she won't be right near, can't commute. It would be wrong to commute, because she would be missing school life, not living on the campus.

Riess: Does your sister get over here to visit?

Domoto: She never bought a car. She can drive, too, because she used to drive my dad around. And it's not that she can't afford it. But she travels around the Bay Area here mostly by public transportation, buses and BART. She goes on trips to different places.

I think about a month ago she went back to New York, and my brother--it wasn't his eightieth birthday, but they picked a day that would be easiest for all his offspring to come together to have a party, so she went there and came back.

Three Generations at Stanford: Changing Times

[Interview 8: November 12, 1992] ##

Domoto: [talking about visit from daughter, and granddaughter] What a change in the codes of living at Stanford since I was there! All the freshmen, they used to be in one dormitory, and now they are scattered.

In my sophomore year they had a women's dormitory, and a men's dormitory, for the freshman group. And then the fraternity row, or sorority, I think the first two quarters they had to be in the freshman dormitory before they could go live in the sorority or fraternity. That was the way it was set.

Now, evidently, there is a much larger enrollment, and they have five living groups: there is Asian--and I think that means the Chinese and Japanese group--and Filipino, Latin [Latino], and then there is male and female together.

Riess: And African American.

Domoto: Yes.

And when my son Doug [Douglas] was there, they had the three-story dormitory, so men were on one floor, and women on another. Now my granddaughter is in a living group that has men and women scattered all over the building!

Riess: You would have to do all your studying in the library, because the dormitory would be seething with activity.

Domoto: Yes, turmoil and noisy. But I think the way they grow up--. When she was visiting, they were in the midst of getting ready for mid-quarter already, because Stanford is on the quarter system, and she had books, and while we were talking, after a while she went off and she said she had to read a bunch of books for mid-quarter. Evidently, even with the noises around them, they are able to kind of seal themselves away. With me, if I was trying to read something I would be distracted, but it doesn't seem to bother them at all.

Riess: Did you visit the campus while they were here?

Domoto: No, I haven't been there for a long, long time. They tell me about the changes, but I haven't seen it. My other granddaughter, Alex [Alexandra], graduated this last summer from Swarthmore, and now she is back in Seattle.

Riess: Why did she choose Swarthmore?

Domoto: I don't know. Marilyn went to Stanford and Columbia. For some reason, I guess maybe some of her [Alex's] friends went there. Kind of surprised me, because it's such a small college, you know.

Riess: Two granddaughters. Any grandsons?

Domoto: No, no grandsons. The last of the Domotos in that group there. My son just has one daughter, Allison.

Riess: The women will carry the name. A new age.

Domoto: I guess that's the history of families all over--the importance of family is being dissipated.

Riess: Will you have family with you at Thanksgiving?

Domoto: I don't think so, because Marilyn is teaching, so she won't be able to get away. We're scattered so far apart now.

Riess: What does she teach?

Domoto: [laughs] Japanese. American-born, and speaking very little Japanese when she entered college. But when the first Stanford-in-Japan group started, a two-year session for students to study over there, the exchange student idea, she was only a sophomore at the time, but a couple of the other students that were supposed to go at the last minute couldn't go. So in order to fill out the group the professor asked her if she wanted to go. She laughed. She said, "I'm like the flea on the dog's tail." I remember that remark, I thought it was so apropos!

But she went, and for two years studied there. And now she's teaching. She said she was glad to be able to go to Japan at that time because she learned the older Japanese--not the real old, but the older--and now the everyday language has gotten a mixture of so many of the English words that have been made into Japanese. She said they would be talking, and she would catch something, and realize it was English that has been translated.

Riess: She was there in about 1960?

Domoto: I think so.

Riess: And then at Columbia, what did she study?

Domoto: Japanese.

Riess: Does she teach language, or literature?

Domoto: Language mostly, though in the language you get the history with it, but mostly the language.

Riess: Does your granddaughter speak Japanese?

Domoto: No, very little. Maybe now, since her mother is teaching it, they might a little bit. Some of the words. Just about the same stage as Marilyn and Doug were, because around here we always talked to them in English, and only when Alice's folks came to live with us, then sometimes they tried to speak to Grandma and Grandpa. Grandpa spoke English, but Grandma, very little. So she'd have to try to talk with her. But she had been here so long, Grandma, that she only understood "California Japanese." So, it was funny.

Riess: [added during the editing process when the interview was being read back to Mr. Domoto:] And Doug, tell me about him. Where was he born?

Domoto: Doug was born in Elgin--he refused the claims for reparations, even though he was born before 1943.

Doug is a specialist in kidney disease. He lives in St. Louis. Actually, now he's interested in forensic medicine and studying that. He went to Stanford and Yale. After he finished Yale, he went to the University of Chicago. Then he served for a while in the army--before his internship was completed--in one of the big camps down in Texas. I remember his mentioning that outside the army camp there was a community that needed medical help, and doing that would help him get experience, but there was no chance, that was the army, the rules.

Just about when he was graduating from high school and going to college I know he said to Alice [his mother] that he wasn't going into the nursery business. "If Dad wants someone to carry on, he'll have to find a husband for Marilyn." [laughs]

Riess: Had you expected him to take over?

Domoto: No. I would have liked it. But I've seen so many families where they had to follow in their parents' business, and they didn't do a good job because their whole heart was not in it.

Riess: Did he marry a Japanese girl?

Domoto: No, both of them married Caucasians. Doug's wife was the only daughter of a doctor.

Riess: Did that bother you?

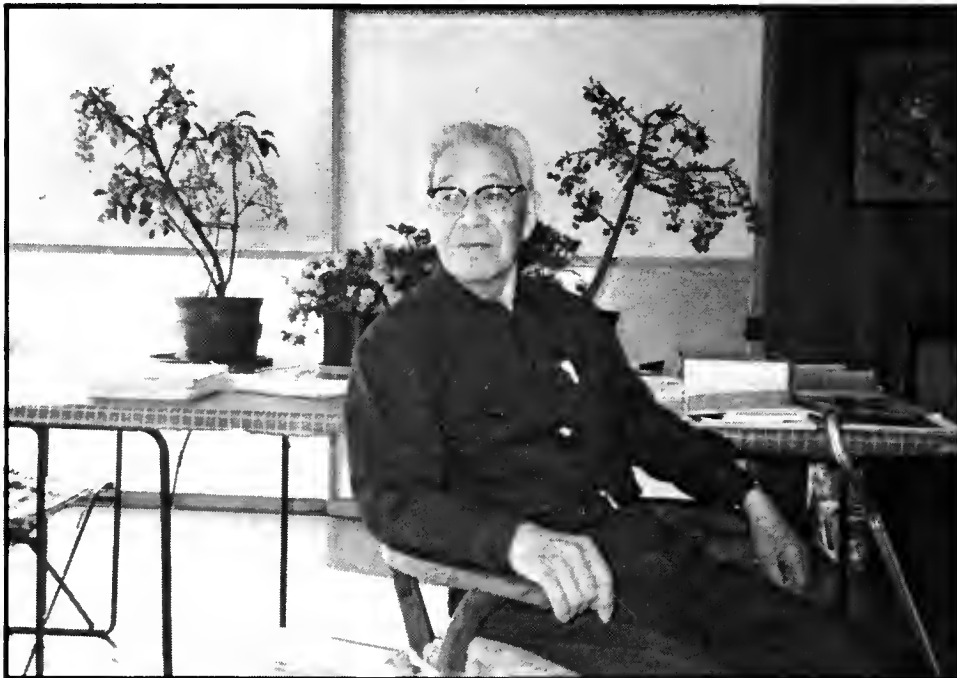
Domoto: I wrote to each of them a letter saying that I had no prediction for their marriages, but that before they had children, to think of what their children's life would be.

At that time if you were a "half-breed" you were ostracized from both societies. But now, it's accepted. My personal opinion on that was based on two mixed-race people I had met in college days. I knew them socially. The man, who had married a mixed-race girl, said they belonged nowhere, to neither group. Hapa, half-breed, we had that term in Japanese.

But things are different now for my granddaughters. A lot depends on the community too and the section of society. In a university town, people are more open-minded, or else hide their feelings. Sophisticated hypocrites. You'll never know it.



Suzanne Riess and Toichi Domoto reviewing the edited oral history. October 1992.



TAPE GUIDE--Toichi Domoto

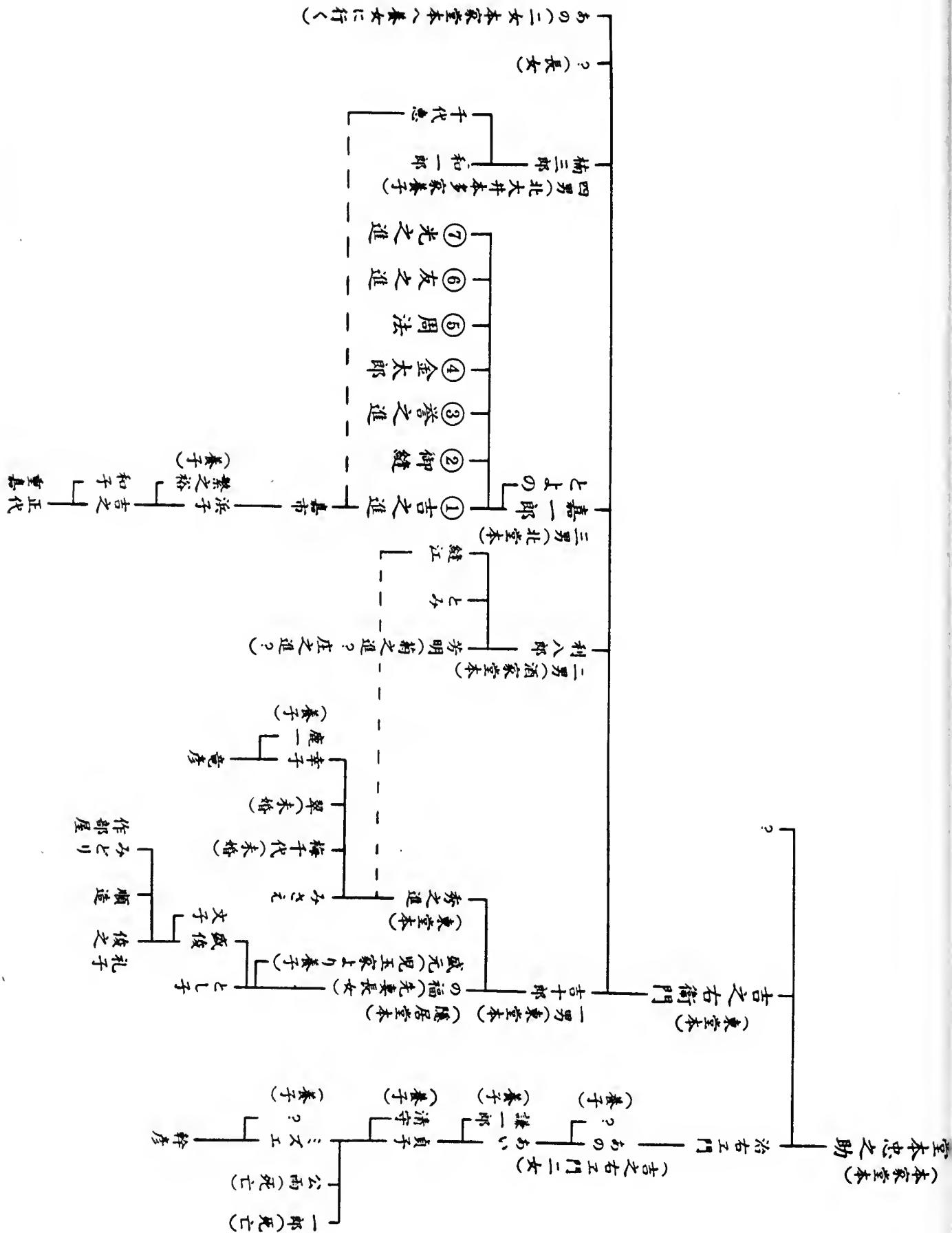
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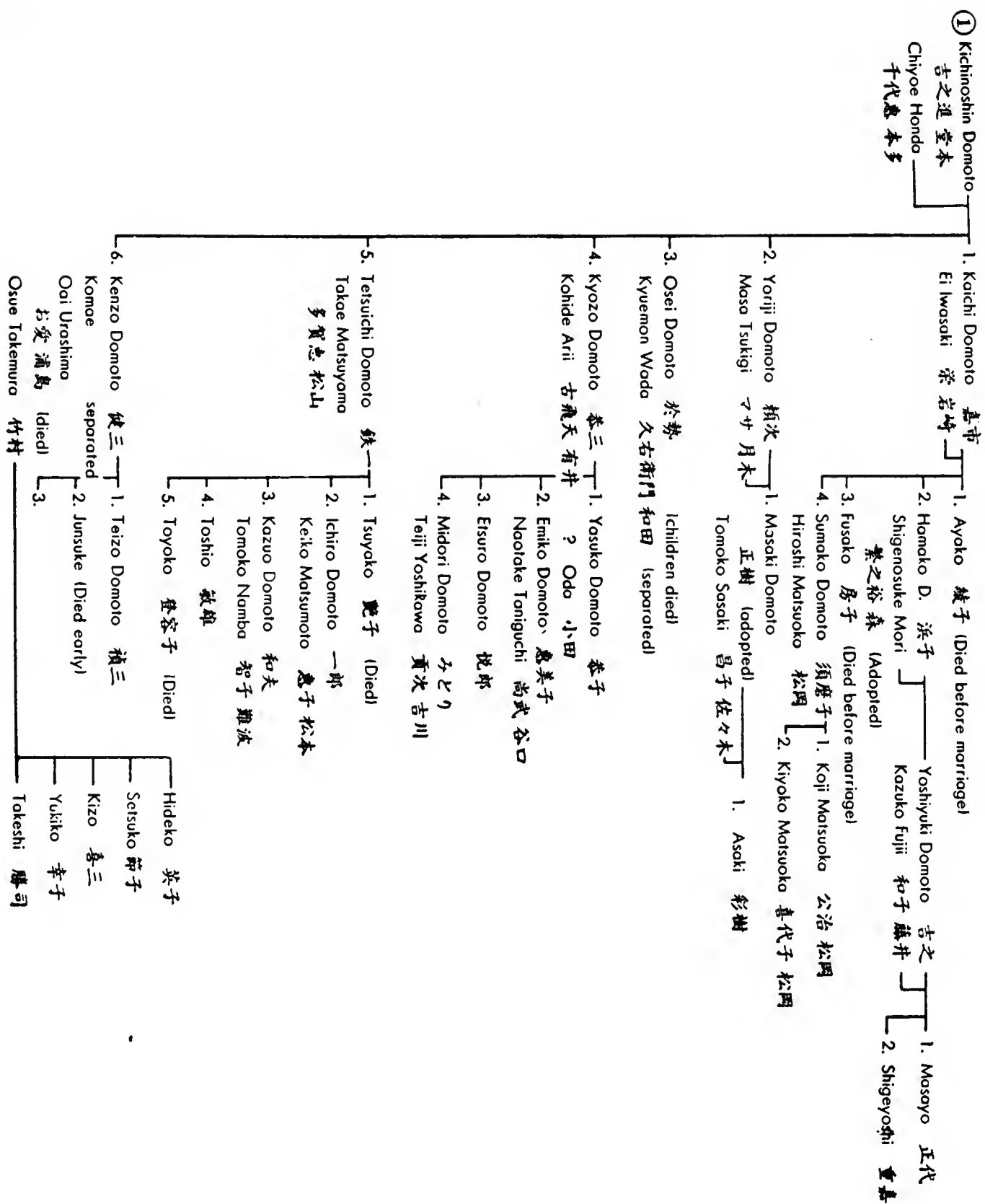
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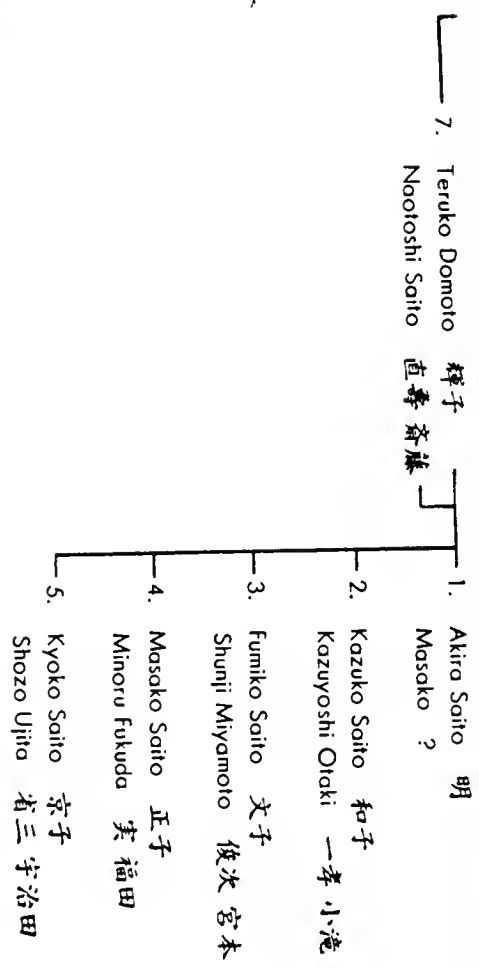
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THE DOMOTO FAMILY



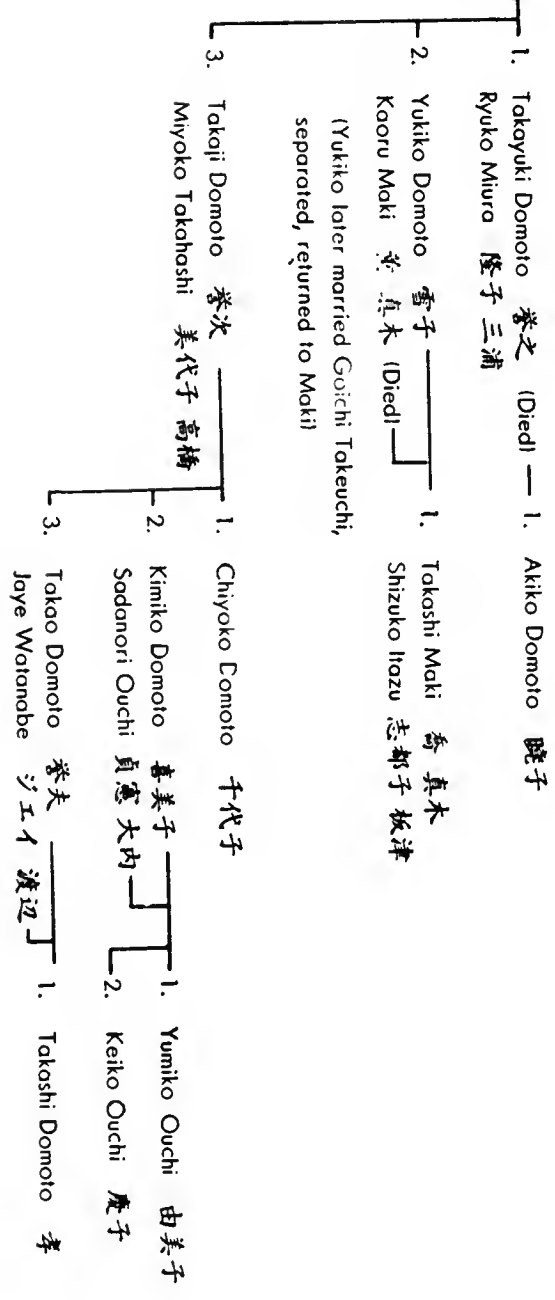


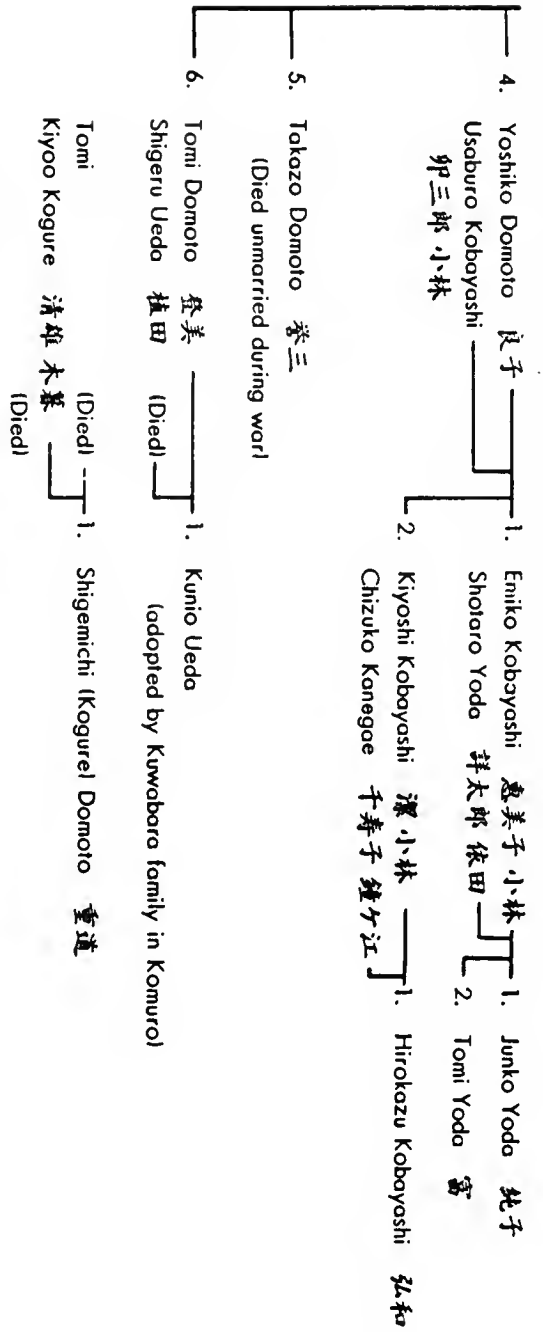


② Onui Domoto 御縫
Fukutaro Omat 福太郎 大亦

(no descendants)

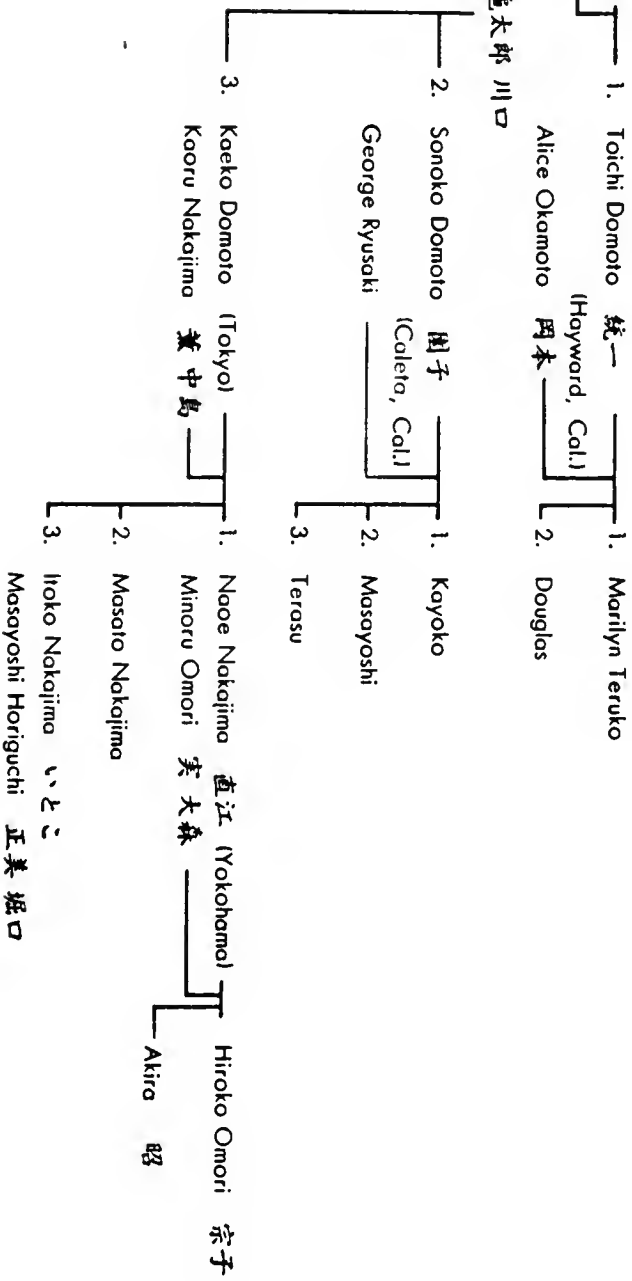
③ Takanoshin Domoto 誉之進
Matsue Uno 松枝 宇野

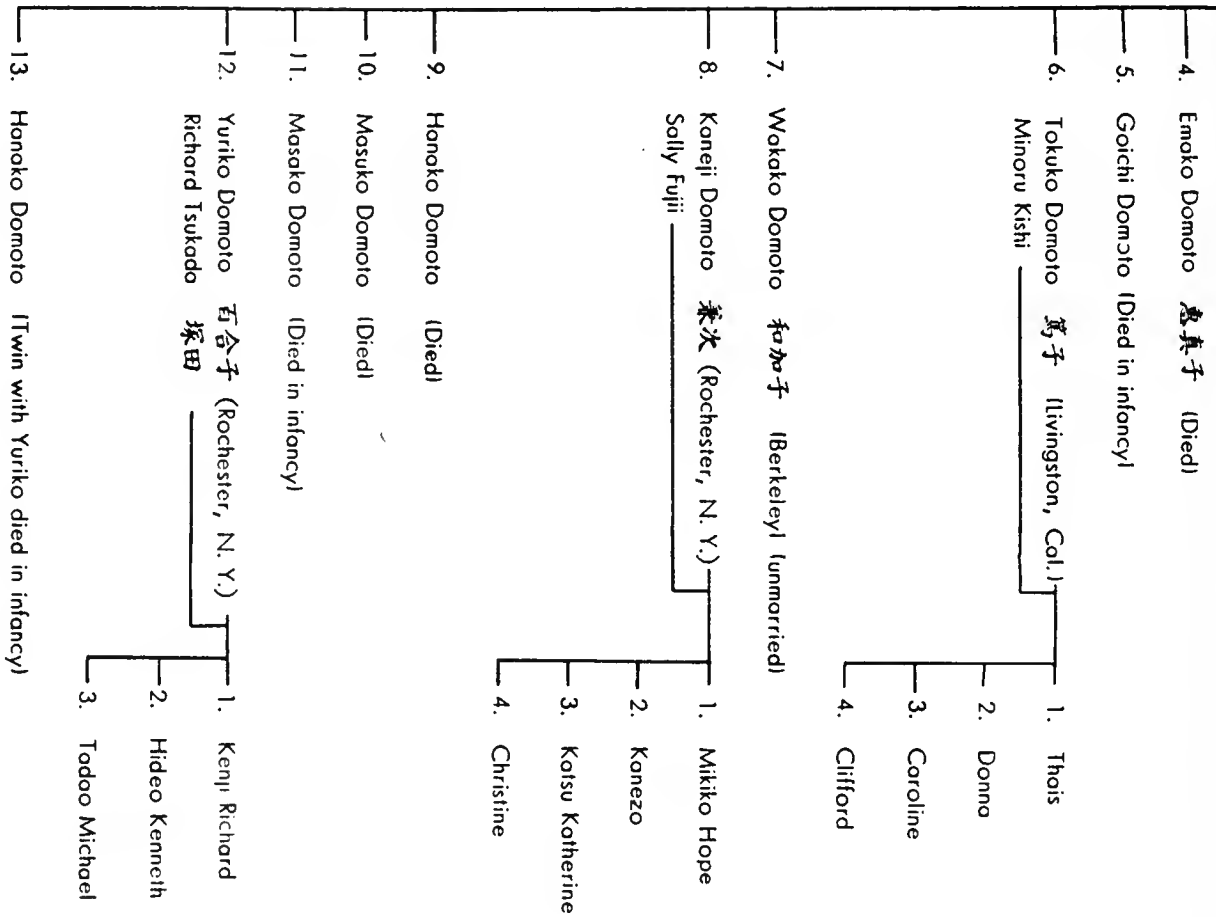




④

Kanetaro Domoto 金太郎
 Teru Morita てる 森田
 (Kanetaro was adopted
 to Kanetaro Kawaguchi 龜太郎 川口
 but returned to Domoto)

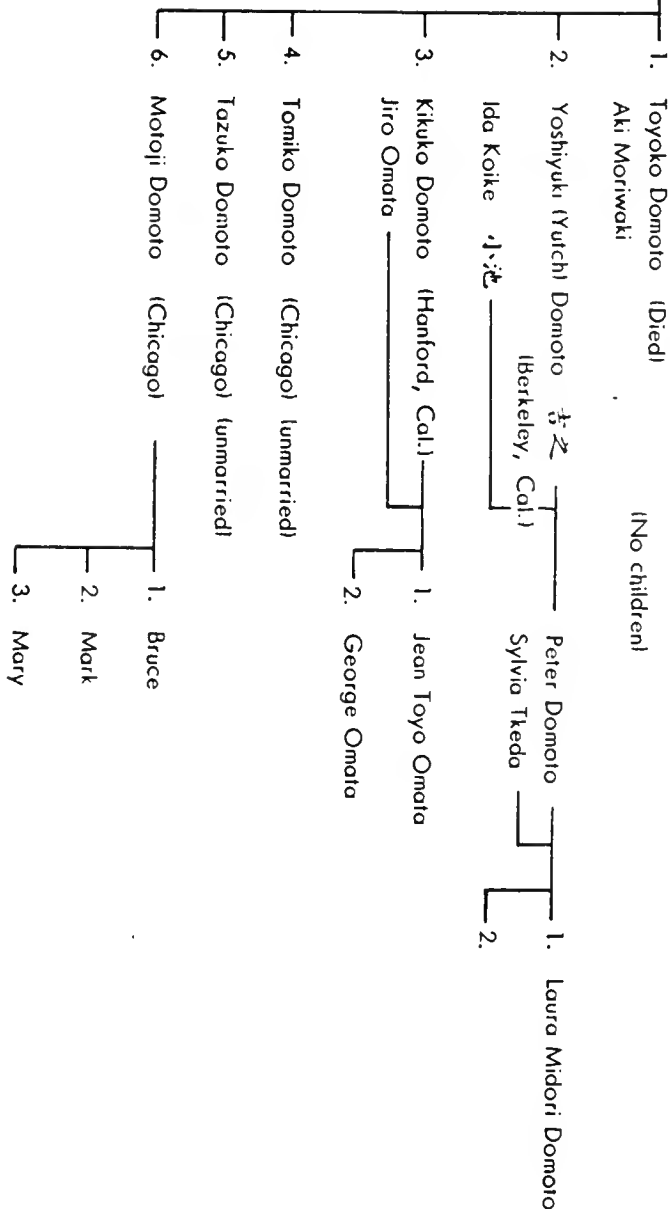




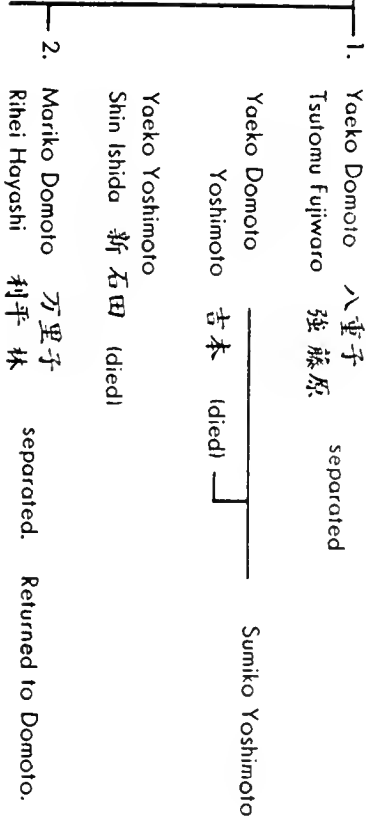
⑤ Shuho Sawada 周法 沢田

Given name 本之進 堂本
Was adopted by Hideraka Sawada
Registered name 秀儿 沢田
Became a priest at Mount Koyo
Ordained name 周法
Died in U. S. A.

⑥ Tomonoshin Domoto
Masae ~~Domoto~~



⑦ Mitsunoshin Domoto
Masu Uno



U.S. W. H. Report

The University of Illinois floriculture students took annual inspection trips to major garden flower shows. This was Toichi Domoto's report from his March 1925 trip to St. Louis. The final words, THE END OF A PERFECT INSPECTION TRIP, are followed by the words, typed in red, "Will be remembered by 'Squee gee To ma ta' for some time."

Floricultural Inspection Trip

March 1925.

*
*

T. Domoto

"All aboard", called the conductor on the "I.C.Milk Special" for Decatur and thus started the annual floricultural students-inspection trip. St. Louis was the objective, and "Stan" Hall and "Doc" Reinard were our guardians. The bunch soon settled down to the old pastime of "hearts" to while away the time as we passed thru the level cornfield district on the way to Decatur. Mr. Hall for some reason seemed to be a champion in the game of "hearts" and carried the sweepstakes during the entire journey. He was able to show Miss Williams how to get the queen later during the trip.

We were greeted at Decatur by Mr. Daut and by that heroic group of rough riders who wore red tied instead of bandana handkerchiefs.

Our first stop was at the retail store of Daut Brothers. The window display was typically "springy". Bulbous stock and spring flowers with a smirking of Easter goods made the window very attractive. A large handle basket filled with Butterfly roses, dyed the color of Burpee's Orange sweet peas, made many of us ask, "what is the name of this beautiful rose?".

In the rear of the store a bride's bouquet was in the making; while a completed Maid's bouquet of the dyed Butterfly roses showed the possibilities of coloring roses to match the color of gowns, should natural colors be unsuitable for the purpose. (8-12 hours is the time required to dye)

The basement of the store is used for mossing designs and packing room during the busy season. A Kroeschell cooling machine in the basement furnishes the cooling medium for the ice box.

One could easily see from the wraps hanging up in the mezzanine floor that the help in the store was composed mostly of women. Baskets of the types called for commonly by the trade filled the remainder of this floor. The second floor is a store room for shipping boxes, odd baskets, files, and etc.

As we were going out Mary Williams spotted the store pet, a gay polly, and tried to get acquainted by saying hello, but was greeted by a raucous "Good Bye". The time being short, we hurried on to the pot plant range of Daut Brothers.

The houses in this range were of Moninger construction, semi-iron ridge and furrow. Part of them were east and west houses, and the others north and south.

A few things of note at this range were the callas growing in pots plunged in manure; the sweet pea house, with its ground beds and rows about three feet apart. Wires stretched parallel along the ground and at the top with strings running vertically and across furnished the supports for the

peas; and the method of growing cyclamens in benches in light soil until of a size suitable for 3 or 4 inch pots. This is a method found in use at the various establishments visited during the trip.

The new range a couple of blocks away was devoted to cut roses and carnations with intercrops of spring bedding stocks. The first house entered, a semi-iron one 32'x150' served for propagating house. The 6 other houses were all iron framers of the American Greenhouse Co. make. Each house being 37'x 300'. The heating plant consists of two boilers 150 horsepower each. Mr. Daut told us that they are going to heat the pot plant range from this new heating plant and thus do away with the hot water heating system in use at the old range.

All the cut flowers are sold in there own store, no selling is done at the new range. Spring bedding stock is not handled at the store in town but from the pot plant range.

We arrived at the station and left Decatur at about 10:40 on a more pretentious and cleaner coach for Pana.

Again, the "rough riders" beat us into town. However, this time they were waiting for us at the hotel. Sedans galore carried us to the St. Francis Hotel where we were the guests of the W. A. Amling Co. for luncheon. It seemed as tho the whole town had come out to greet us, such was the air of cordiality and welcome.

Music was provided and everyone was satisfied, except Reudy who was rather downcast, because the "Girl in Red" did not tarry long enough after playing, to hear him let loose with his amorous lines.

The first range visited was that of the Amling Co. This range consists of four units of seven houses each. These are ridge and furrow, Iron framers 37'x300' long. This is a very good width as it will accomodate seven benches each 43" wide and leave an 18" inch walk. Four rows of roses are planted in the bench and the house when filled has in it about 52,000 plants.

Two units have separate grading and cool rooms, while the two others are combined in one large building which houses the heating plant and the offices.

Ten men and a foreman take care of each unit. The cut from the unit at the time of our visit being in the neighborhood of 210,000 per day with a crop of about 250,000 or 260,000 at Mother's Day.

Four horizontal tubular boilers of 150 h.p. each furnish the steam necessary for the four units, but during the coldest months (Dec. 15 - April 15 th) steam is used from the heating plant of the Pana Floral Co. to heat one of the units, as in this way it will not be an overload on the boilers.

Nine to ten thousand tons of coal is necessary to heat this modern "rose factory".

The roses are graded by arranging them on the tables according to length and then bunching from the fine end with the long stems. The bunches have 25 flowers in them and are wrapped around the buds with a special butter paper to prevent the petals from bruising. These are shipped to the wholesale market in corrugated boxes, heavily wrapped in paper in winter and lighter and iced during the summer. St. Louis and Chicago are the two main markets to which they ship.

Mr. Ameling gave us an idea as to the production of the different varieties being grown:

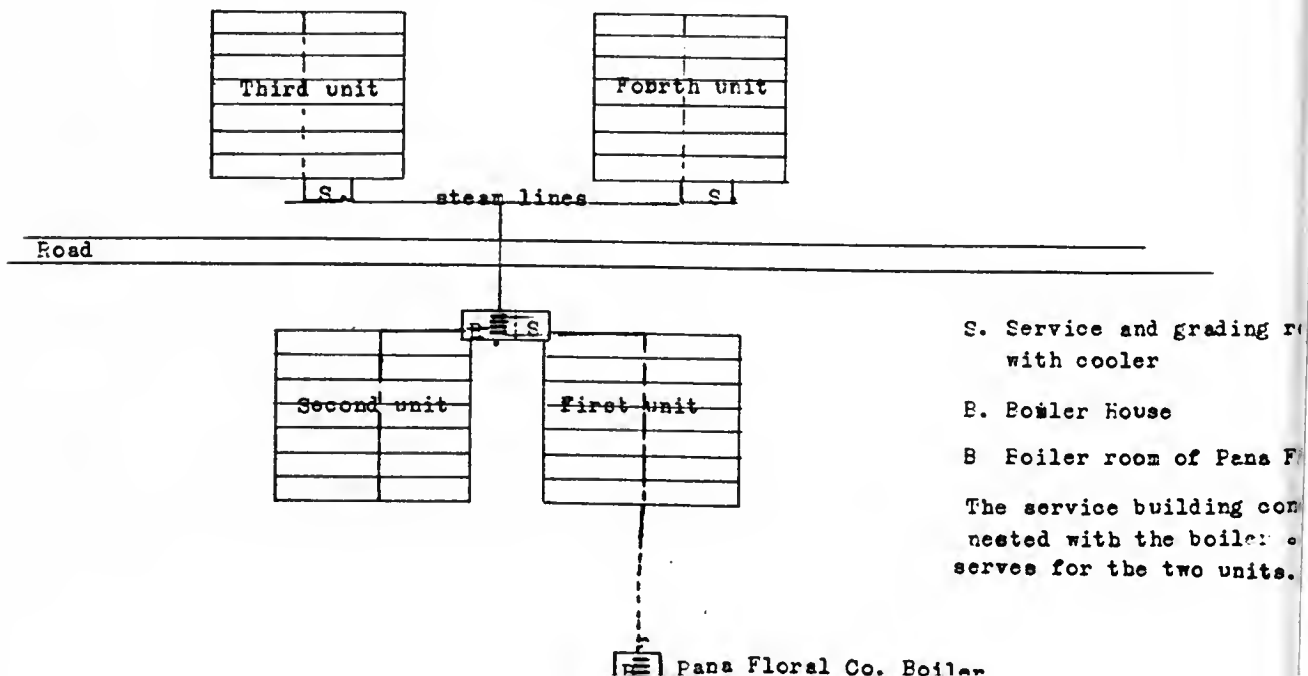
Columbias	-----	34	flowers	per	year
Premiers	-----	32	"	"	"
Butterfly	-----	42	"	"	" (third year)

"Sensation does very well with us. We have no trouble with the color this we attribute to the fact that we grow it in 58° until buds form and then increase to 62° before bloom in order to get the good color".

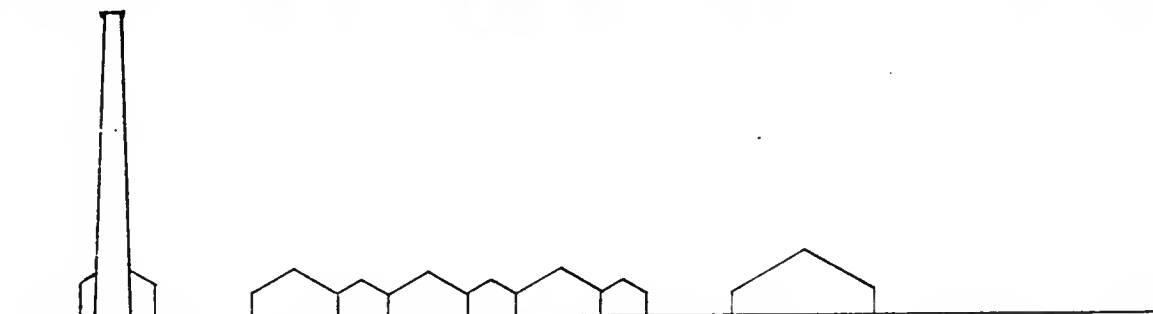
The Columbia roses are run thru without resting. The blind wood is thinned out in May and the plants fed.

The roses are syringed regardless of weather, and as yet they have had no trouble with Black spot. If the sun is not shining on the day they are to syringe, the temperature of the house is slightly increased and the ventilators at the top opened to allow the moisture laden air to escape.

A ROUGH SKETCH OF THE W.A. ANLING RANGE AT PANA, ILLINOIS



Pana Floral Company's rose range were the next ones to be visited by us. The houses run east and west and are of the even span type, but built with a large house alternating with one about one half its size. A large detached iron frame house 60 feet by 400 feet was on the south side of this range. This size house is not the best size for commercial houses as the cost per square foot of ground space covered increases considerably after the 40 foot limit is reached. Another thing which is against this house is the fact that the two north benches are always shaded during the winter.



Elevation of Pana Floral Company Range.

A short walk across the field of about one block brought us to the factory of the American Greenhouse Manufacturing Co. where Mr. F. J. Impey was our guide. This company builds about 1,000,000 square feet per year. Due to the increase in the building of greenhouses in the East, another factory is being built in New Jersey.

Clear tank cypress is the only wood used in construction of the wooden members of the greenhouses put up by this concern. A new drip proof gutter of galvanized iron of the modified V type seemed to be quite satisfactory, judging from the appearances of the Amling and other ranges.

The cost per square foot of glass area is about \$1.00 for the standard type house. The iron structural members are all painted with brushes, and the wooden members are painted with an air brush.

Sweet peas, the finest that I have ever seen were in bloom at the mum and sweet pea range of Maton Brothers. The peas were growing in the beds prepared right on the floor of the houses. A six inch board served to hold the soil in place.

The beds are 4 feet wide, and the peas are planted across the beds, the rows are 14 inches apart, with four groups in a row. The seeds are started in pots after chipping the seed coat to insure even germination. Five seeds are planted and later thinned out to three. Bone meal is used on the benches at the rate of 50 pounds to 150 feet of bed. The unusually

long stems and large flowers were accounted for by the fact that the flowers had been pinched until a short time before our visit to the place. A full crop was expected for Easter. The peas are started in 42° temperature and gradually increased to 50° night temperature.

The peas are bunched and shipped to the St. Louis Wholesale cut flower market.

The rose range of Aser Brothers was visited next and then that of Webb and Spanbauer. Mr. Spanbauer is an experienced grower, having been with E. G. Hill and Joe Hill for twenty five years. Two of their houses had been uplanted into young stock while the other two were filled with young rose plants and other miscellaneous crops. Souvenir de Claudius Pernet budded on Rosa odorata were in good condition. Mr. Spanbauer is in favor of grafted while the Amling Co. had own root stock on their range.

An idea as to cost of this range was given by Mr. Impey. The four 37'x300' houses together with boiler room and cooling room, and a 150 h.p. boiler cost \$60,000. This amount does not include the cost of plants, but practically everything that is necessary for the running of the range.

We were very fortunate in being allowed to visit the coal mines of the Penwell Coal Mining Co. After being fitted out with miners hats, carbide lamps, electric torches, we entered the mine by riding down a cage 750 feet into the ground. This is the deepest operating mine in Illinois. The queer sensation of falling is akin to that of going down in a swift elevator, but after a few seconds the feeling is reversed and I felt as tho I was going to be shot out of the mine. These cages are balanced and the cable measured so that when one cage is at the top, the other is at the bottom.

The mine was well ventilated and much cleaner than I expected. An "electric mule" pulled the two straw laden coal trucks to the end of the mine where the coal was being dug. "Rooms" are opened up varying distances and the coal taken out, after which the mouths are sealed for safety and better ventilation. The boring is done with hand and machine drills, after which the vein is blown down with dynamite. The coal is loaded in as large a lump as possible into the trucks which hold in the neighborhood of three tons. These loaded cars are drawn by mules to the loading platform from where the electric locomotives pull it to the shafts. The miners are paid from \$1.75 to \$2.25 per ton for mining. Our trip underground covered about five miles. All the mine is propped with braces of pine and other wood, post costing from ten to forty cents each.

The electric current necessary for lighting the mine and operating the electric motors and locomotives is generated at this plant. 250 volts

is the voltage required to operate the electric cars. The ventilating apparatus consists of a large blower which blows the air into the mines. the foul air comes out thru the shaft. In order to prevent any explosions from coal dust the mines are sprinkled in the winter, this is necessary in this mine because it is a very dry mine. The mine was an interesting place to visit, but personally I was glad to get away from it.

Our visit in Pana, ended with supper at the St. Francis, with appropriate songs and speeches. Mr. Amling called upon the boys with the red ties to sing. They were ably accompanied on the piano by the "Girl in red". Mr. Jordan of the Pana Palladium then sang a selection, followed by one from Rude, who insisted on stalling around the piano even after his piece had been selected.

We left Pana at 6:52 on the Big Four and arrived in St. Louis about 9. We desired to live in class and consequently took a room on the second floor of the Statler, (even tho it was a sample room).

End of the First perfect Day.

Friday, March 27,-----

We started out on the second day of inspection from the Statler hotel at about eight o'clock, Altho I daresay many would have been late for an "Eight o'clock" if it had been held in Urbana.

Mr. L. A. Hoerr and his brother, E. M. Hoerr took us in their cars to the wholesale cutflower market district. E. C. Berning's was the first place visited. Here we were able to see the roses from Amling's being unpacked. The train service is very good and the cut of the previous day is shipped out of Pana at five in the morning and arrives in time for the mornings business. The sweet peas of the Maton Bros. is also handled by this firm. The stock handled by this company is sold on a commission basis.

Of the roses, Premier far outnumbered any of the others. Butterfly Columbias, Coolidges, and Double white Killarney were the other varieties. Carnations -- Laddies with stems 36 inches long were in the market. The miscellaneous stock consisted of lupines, calendulas, snapdragons, callas, narcissus varieties, tulips, sweet peas, delphiniums, and greens.

The St. Louis Wholesale Cut Flower Company's handles besides cut flowers, florist supplies and pot plants. A fine assortment of potted bulb stock, Astilbes, a few Easter lilies, and hydrangeas made a very pretty window display for a wholesale house. Mr. Pfender, the manager of the store conducted us thru the place. Long stemmed Darwin tulips with perfect large

flowers, and the rather scarce jonquil narcissus created considerable comment on the part of the students. We learned that tulips can be stored for 12 days in storage after cutting without any harm.

Gardenias, greenhouse grown, and lily of the valley, gave suggestion of flowers for weddings.

Most of the flowers shipped to this concern come in corrugated paper boxes. Some very carefully packed and others miserably. Mr. Pfender stated that the grower would be money ahead if they would use a little more care in packing as bruised flowers do not keep as long or sell as well. The boxes should be properly lined, and the stems braced in so that there will be no chance for the bunches to move around inside of the boxes while in transit. When asked about shipping back empty boxes to the growers, Mr. Pfender said that it did not pay the grower to use the old boxes if they had to be shipped back to him. A 48" x 20" box costs 45 cents, and the cost of flattening and shipping ^{to Indiana} is at least 10 cents. If by using the old box a few rose buds are broken off, the loss is greater than the difference between the cost of an old and new box. These boxes can, however, be used by the wholesaler at an advantage in shipping out orders for local trade. In this way the grower can be reimbursed for the boxes.

A sample room for baskets occupies about one third of the main floor space. The second floor is used for a store room for supplies, and everything is in "apple pie order."

The inspection of the wholesale being over (in time schedule) we left for Larimore where the rose range of the St. Louis Rose Co. is situated. The Herrs drove us thru the scenic part of the city on the way to Larimore, and even stopping at Chain of Rocks park to view the Mississippi and the new water settling plant. The city of St. Louis nurseries, situated along the river side had many young stock coming along.

The range of the St. Louis Rose Co. is situated on a well drained site, with plenty of room for expansion in the future. This is the first good example of a well planned greenhouse range, built with the thoughts for the future. Space had been left for an extra boiler in the boiler building, the smoke stack is large enough to take care of the extra boiler. The pumps for pressure and water are in duplicates, so that should the electric current fail for some reason, the steam pumps can be operated. The water used is pumped from wells and also from the storage reservoir. During the winter, the water is preheated by the exhaust steam of the pumps, to make the task of watering easier and also to prevent any checking of growth in plants. (Last point is theory, has not been tried experimentally)

The luncheon at the Golf club was evertning that could be asked for, and many were the happy sighs that were given by the students, because we would not have to listen to a lecture in a warm room, but have ever changing scenery as we proceeded on our inspection trip.

The pot plant range of the St. Louis Rose Co at Collins Road was in charge of Mr. Day, an experienced English grower. The plants in the houses gave good evidence that quality plants could be grown in a poor house, provided that the man knew how to grow plants.

Of the newer things at this range were Double yellow marguerites called double Golden Saunders. The bright crimson bracts of the Crimeon Lake Bouganvillea and the sweet odor of the Gardenias only helped to emphasize the beauty of flowers.

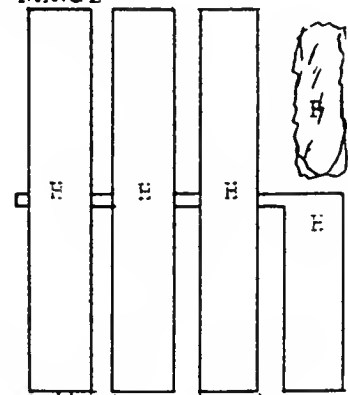
Calceolarias are sown in August to insure a good percentage of germination. Yellow callas which had been started in the fall were in bloom at this time. Begonia Melior cuttings potted up in light soil enabled us to see an example of whole leaf cuttings where the plant develops from the base of the petioles.

Giganteum lilies were coming along in fine shape for Easter. In the newer house, cyclamens in pots and in the benches, showed that the bench method of growing young stock of cyclamens is the better method for that part of the state.

The other crops being grown did not differ from the general run of plants found in the ordinary greenhouses of size. Fancy leaved caladiums added quite a bit of color to that part of the bench which it occupied. Bedding stock for the spring plantings, filled the major part of the range. Roses for the cut rose range at Larimore is propagated at this place.

PLAN OF ST. LOUIS ROSE COMPANY RANGE
Larimore, Missouri

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| C. Cooling room | □ E |
| D. Employees dwelling houses | □ D |
| B. Boiler room | |
| E. Engine room | □ D |
| H. Greenhouses | □ D |
| G. Reservoir for water | |
| S. Siding | |
| W. Well | |



The reservoir by the boiler is of concrete. One part is for liquid manure



Kirkwood, Missouri was a nice ride from the Collins Road Range. The W.A. Rowe Co. has a two unit range devoted mostly to carnations. There are eight houses 37' x 300' in each unit, all of them being iron framers. The benches in these houses are 42" wide thus allowing seven benches instead of the usual six for one of this size. Judging from the houses seen, the 37' house seems to be the most economical and popular.

One range is given over entirely to carnations while the other had four houses of carnations and the remainder in bulbous and spring flowering plants. The house known as "Mr. Rowe's Experimental House" was planted in Iris tingitana, Dutch iris, freesias, and Lupines. Mr. Rowe is very interested in the question of bulb growing and it is in this house that he is carrying out some of his tests on the bulbs. Iris tingitana produces from sixty to seventy five per cent, which is a very good percentage for this bulb.

Lupines in all colors are fine for novelty decorations but they are hard to handle. A fine cut of daffodils, tulips, and hyacinths were in the cooling room. A house of sweet peas, although they did not compare with those of the Maton Brothers at Pana, was producing some fair flowers. Mr. Hoerr told us that the difference was in the fact that the crop was about over at this range while that at Pana was just coming into crop. This is another case where it is necessary to keep an accurate record in order to find out the difference in profit between cutting short stems from November until about March or cutting fancy stemmed peas from the first of March onward.

The changing of soil in the greenhouses is done by the regular help, no other being employed. It is possible to have the soil in these houses changed in two weeks time. Soil for the houses is prepared from sod land.

As a prevention against red spider, a salt solution in the strength 4 pounds to 50 gallons of water was being sprayed on the foliage of the carnations. A paragon sprayer was used.

The first azalea plants to be seen on the trip was at the St. Louis Municipal greenhouses. Hinodegira, Hexe, Christmas Cheer and Coral bells being some of the varieties on display in the show room. The last two are of the Kurume variety. Ficus nitida, a rubber ^{plant} that is being used for window boxes worked in very nicely with the variegated Evonymus japonica argentea variegata to form a background for the spring show.

The pot plant houses are used to grow the plants necessary for the show house and to take care of the bedding stock necessary to plant the park of St. Louis. Abutilon Savitzii, a variegated bedding plant was found in large numbers here. The plants after being in the houses are hardened off in cold frames which are to the south of the greenhouses.

How not to build cold frames was our next lesson, followed by a talk on the use of calcium cyanide for fumigating one half ounce to 1,000 cubic feet is a safe dosage to use on tender plants.

Mr. Kellogg who is in charge of the propagation of shrubs was not present, but we were able to see that he has good success with most of his cuttings. A ligustrum Quihoui with its very fine leaves looks as tho it might make a good plant for trimming in pots like boxwood.

In the old original wooden Shaw houses, many of the bedding stock is propagated. Seeds are mostly sown in sand. Echeverias are planted in light soil in benches, the tops cut off and the side buds which develop used for cuttings. The alternantheras are boxed up with soil on the bottom and sand on top so that cuttings can be taken from the tops if necessary. These are potted into two or two and one quarter inch pots.

Serastostigma plumbagonoides, a deep blue perennial blooming in Aug. the Erantnemum atropurpureum, a deep ox blood colored foliage plant were two things not usually seen as bedding plants.

The orchid houses, of which there are several were provided with a skinner sprinkler to moisten the air in the houses. Vents are at the top, side, and in the masonry of the houses, in order to allow maximum circulation with little opening. The cross houses in this range are used for growing and storing tropical lilies. For this, concrete tanks of varying depths and sizes with bottom heat are used.

Pot washer, utilizing water for the motive power had been installed in the service building, but Mr. Kohl told us that the water is too cold for use in winter and that in summer they are too busy to be washing pots.

Peaches, plums, apples, nectarines, pears, and grapes were trained on the walls and trellises in the fruit house, using the method very common in English greenhouse.

Fern Houses, tropical houses, and the sticky cactus house were all very well kept. The large conservatory for the snow house was filled mostly with cinerarias. From these houses we passed thru the model gardens, the rose gardens, and then the Library.

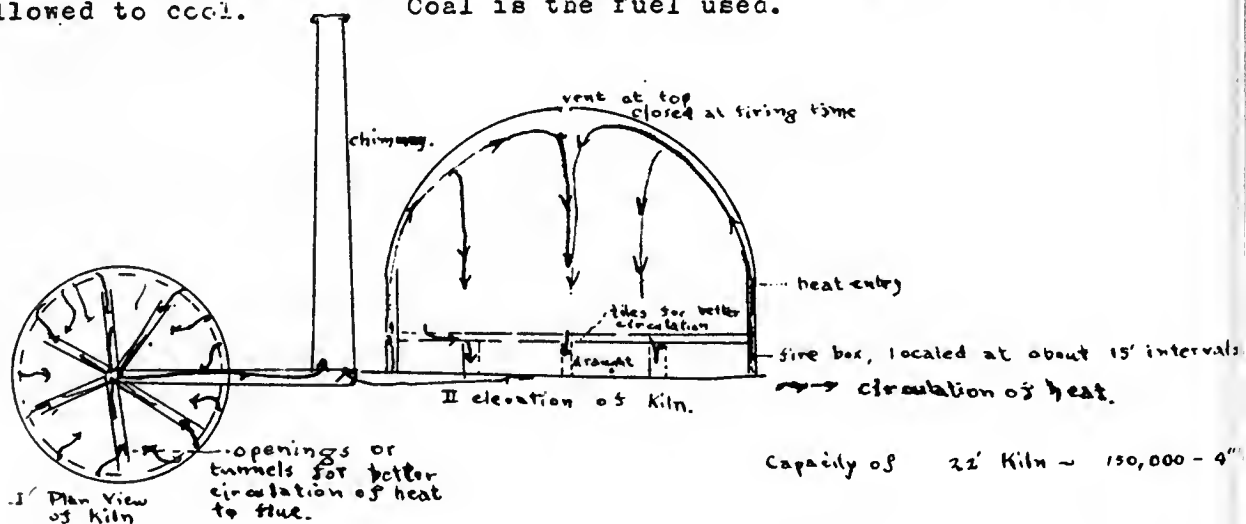
The Hoerrs met us and then escorted the group to the famous "Beno Mill" for luncheon. This mill is designed on the order of a Dutch Windmill and the interior is finished off on the style of the German Ratskeller---Steins and porcelain decorations completed the atmosphere. The boys helped carry out some of the atmosphere when they were served with "steins".

Flower pots being a necessary evil for the grower, we visited the Missouri Pottery and Supply Co. Here we saw pots in practically all stages. Clay for the red pots is dug from the mound in back of the pottery. The clay for the red pots is mixed in the following proportion 20% white clay 10% dark shale, and 70% surface loess (free of sand). This clay is then put thru a mixer and roller, which consists of two large sandstone wheels each weighing 2,800 pounds and revolving in a steel drum. After eighteen minutes all the particles are ground into a fine mass and of the proper moisture content. This clay is then thrown out by an automatic device onto a wheelbarrow and is then carted to a compressing machine, which forces the particles together. The compressed clay comes out of this machine in the form of rolls about 8 inches in diameter. This clay is then cut to the proper amounts and dipped in a mixture of 12 parts kerosene and 1 part lard oil. (the purpose being to prevent the clay from sticking to the die.) For pots smaller than 7 inches, the clay is again broken up and put thru a compressor which forces the clay into a diameter of about 3 inches.

The die consists of two pieces, the one that is at the base of the machine (shaping the outside of the pot) and the part that is revolving and comes down to form the inside. After a couple of stamps the excess clay is taken off at the sides, and the pot is raised out of the die so that they can be handled without danger.

These pots are laid upon boards and allowed to dry from five to ten days depending upon the weather, the rough edges rubbed off with a piece of canvas and the pots stacked in the kilns.

The Kilns are round domed affairs with tile floors upon which the pots are stacked. The burning process takes about ten days. The Kiln is closed and the fires started outside. The temperature is gradually raised to about 500° or 650° to accustom the clay to the temperature and then the firing interval is increased so that when they end up, they are firing every 20 minutes, with the temperature in the neighborhood of 1650°. The pots are allowed to cool. Coal is the fuel used.



In order to insure an more even and better circulation of heat, white porcelain cups with holes in the bottom are laid side by side upon the tile floor., and the pots stacked upon these. A kiln of 22 feet inside diameter will fire about 150,000 four inch pots. The brick kiln is reinforced with wide strips of strap iron.

Jules Bourdet's Pot plant range is close to Shaw Botanical Gardens. The semi-iron houses are of Foley construction, and even span ridge and furrow type. This modern range is one that has been remodeled from an old one which Mr. Bourdet took over. The service house extends clear thyp one end of the houses and is wide enough so that trucks can drive right in an load up in front of the various houses.

Hydrangeas, Lilies, pot roses, and bulb plants filled the major part of the range. The nydrangeas are all pot grown, being plunged into the ground during the summer to prevent drying out. When asked whether he fed or treated the nydrangeas in order to get the deep blue color, Mr. Bourdet replied that he did not. The fausenschoen, Ideal, Dorothy Perkins, Excelsa and a few other Bush roses are all eastern and California grown stock.

Bone meal is not used, the only commercial fertilizer used being a a liquid fertilizer which he gets from Chicago. This applied with a special pump rigged up on a wooden barrel from a Ford water pump and a small electric motor. With this rigging he is able to feed in less than one half the time formerly required to feed.

The propagating house benches are made of concrete, with wood bottom. The bottom neat is furnished from a three inch pipe and from two two inch pipes. The temperature below the bench gets very high () but he is able to keep the sand at the right temperature. Many things such as coleus can be rooted in a little over a week with good percentage.

The cool house for his outside stock consists of a greenhouse frame covered over with boards. Some lilacs and hydrangeas were being kept back in here for Mother's and Memorial Day. "Otaheit oranges in pots are good sellers when the fruit sets on them," said Mr. Bourdet.

Dieffenbachias may make good house plants but are not edible, is the verdict rendered by Mary Williams and "Teddy" Baer.

That we might follow the course of the plants, Mr. Hoerr took us to Grimm and Gorley's retail store. This is probably the best equipped retail store in the middle west. The Four stories of the building are all used by the company. The basement for design work; Main floor for sales and display the second floor for display and salesroom during the rush season; and the

floor for the office force. This firm not only does florist work, but caters to large outdoor and ballroom decorating. For instance, the setting for a Venetian Party required over two months to build, but was tore down less than a week. another elaborate decoration was one in which 50,000 balloons were used to simulate bunches of grapes. This firm employs over men, an increditable number for even a store of this size.

We were all presented with a rose to show that we had been guests Grimm and Gorley's. A tag with "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you may get a wreath from Grimm and Gorleys", gave us the necessary excuse for returning to the hotel in order to clean up for the Florists Minstrel Show and dance. The Merry makers did not return until way after the time when most people are in bed. The crowd however was well taken care of because Doc and Mr. Hall did not return until after the crowd.

Sunday. March 28.

Leaving St. Louis at 9:00 A.M. was not very difficult but many of us took naps on the way to Springfield. Mr. Hall had to wake a few of us to show a picture of his old "army boss".

We visited the retail store of A.C. Brown in Springfield and then proceeded out to his home where we were their guests for lunch.

The greenhouses of Mr. Brown are located on a hillside. Roses, are the main crop, with bulb stock and bedding plants to fill up the main house. Russell, a pink rose which is the standby on the Pacific coast was being grown here.

The next place to be visited in Springfield was the store of Hembreiker and Cole. The window decorations were fitting for Easter. I did not see much of it, because of the fact that I ran away to get a picture of the Capitol.

Spereas for Easter, tulips in cool houses, ferns, young cyclamens, and carnation plants were at the first pot plant range of Hembreiker and Cole. At the second range, pot plants and roses are grown. A very even and good sized house of Liliun giganteums were coming in for Easter. The lili of the Erabu type which they had growing did not impress me as being any better than the other Formosums. The bedding stock is all sold from this range, none of it being handled at the store because it musses the floor too much.

The new rose range which was built recently is to be paid for in a short while. Mr. Hembreiker stated that there would be a celebration in connection with it as they had the money to pay it off already.

A record of the number of flowers cut is kept on the wall of each house. We were then driven thru the better residential district of Springfield and arrived at the I.T.S. station just in time for the train to Champaign,

A game of hearts was started and continued until we arrived in the old town of Champaign, a tired and a probably a more intelligent crowd.

THIS IS THE END OF A PERFECT INSPECTION TRIP.

Will be remembered by "Sweet bee to ma ta"
for some time.

DATE	AUTOGRAPHS	ADDRESS	BIRTHDAY	A TOAST
3/1/26	Thomas R. Shien	Young Spring Road Kemp, China	Oct 2, '03	You are my friend (in need)
2/1/26	Clara Dale Barber	Box 10, Kane County Illinois	Aug 5, '03	What a lovely party successful in just 40 days
2-1-26	Edw. P. Lucier	Springer, Illinois Highway 10, Illinois	June 29 '01	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2-3-26	Charles Prather	Adelstein, Rockway, Indiana York, Kansas, Salt Lake	Feb. 1915	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2-3-26	Lucien L. Jones	Adelstein, Rockway, Indiana York, Kansas, Salt Lake	Feb. 1915	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/2/26	Stewart Mitchell Brownell	Starkville, Miss.	Jan 4, 1900	More love to Rome
2/2/26	Howard E. Thompson	Starkville, Miss.		My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/2/26	Raymond W. S. Sargent	8540 Elmwood St. Chicago, Illinois Spartanburg, S.C.	May 23, 1911	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/2/26	Gold Knight	Canada	Dec. 25, 1904	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	Julia Grant Zimmerman	2025 Washington Ave. W. 212 North Washington Pawnee, Nebraska	Jan 16, 1904	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	James D. Schuman	612 Michigan Ave Chicago, Ill.		My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	W. F. Weinard	713 W. Duane St. Chicago, Ill.	Dec. 2, 1893	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	Stanley W. Hall	1003 So. Orchard St. Chicago, Ill.	Aug. 3, 1891.	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	Amey T. Smith	Anderson, Mass.	Sept. 25, 1897	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/3/26	Paul R. Krone	132 Astor St Chicago, Ill.	April 3, 1906	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/4/26	Virginia A. Wikstrom	531 West Green Street Chicago, Ill.	August 18 1904	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/4/26	Robert C. Hancock	Chicago, Ill.	Oct 25, 1902	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.
2/4/26	J. B. Heilman	933 So. 5th St Springfield, Ill.	May 23, 1896	My dear friend, I am happy to see you and your family come and friends go, but let's go on forever.

FRIENDS OF MINE

DATE	AUTOGRAPHS	ADDRESS	BIRTHDAY	TA TOAST
Feb 6, 1900	J. Garwood.	4 Gatehouse, Japan	March 15	
Oct 14, '25	Eugene T. Fox	Wood River, Illinois	Oct. 31, '02	To the "Angel Spirit" Of our first and best remembered so!
Dec 31, '25	W.B. Barber	Burlington, Indiana 585 Madison Ave.	Jan. 10, 1878	
Dec 31, '25	Mary Ann Barber	Madison, Ill. 803 Third Ave	Mar 19, 1916	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Dec 31, '25	Anna J. Barber	Madison, Ill. 29 East North St	Sept. 1, 1910	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 14, 1926	Alvany J. Barber	Madison, Ill. 710 Third Ave	Sept. 1, 1910	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 14, '26	Maynard A. Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	May 16, 1904	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 14, '26	Anna J. Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Dec. 4, 1908	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 18	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	May 12, 1896	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 19	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	July 10, 1906	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 19	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Feb. 29, 04	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 19	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Nov. 10, 06	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 19	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Aug. 26, 1904	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 19	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Sept. 20, 1903	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 21	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Jan. 29, 1904	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 21	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	March 3, 03	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 21	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Dec. 25, 1906	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 21	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Mar 5, 1903	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.
Jan 21	Edmund Barber	Madison, Ill. Chamberlain 1114 1/2 S	Oct. 5, 1904	To the friend of a brother who has been so long absent and so long remembered.

FRIENDS OF MINE

DATE	AUTOGRAPHS	ADDRESS	BIRTHDAY	TOAST
1/2/26	Lin-Yung, Lin	Lin-Yung, 110 Park Avenue New York, N.Y.	Dec. 27, '03	
1/2/26	William Becht	114 W. 8th Street Chicago, Ill.	Dec. 5, '04	
1/2/26	William H. Lin	13 Tungku Hwaan, Suen Hong Kong	Feb. 15, '03	
1/21/26	James J. Wilson	220 W. 4th Street New York, N.Y.	July 5, '07	
1/25/26	William H. Lin	701 E. 1st Street Chicago, Ill.	July 11, 1900	
1/29/26	Mary Williams	525 N. 5th St. Mankato, Minn.	Aug. 28, 1904	
1/30/26	Margaret Baker	207 First St. Clarksdale, Miss.	Dec. 23, 1909	
1/30/26	Lucile Jackson	413 Grant St. Baltimore, Md.	June 23,	
1/30/26	Edmund Jackson	1102 1/2 1st St. Baltimore, Md.	Jan. 28, 1880	
1/30/26	Henry L. Knutson	517 E. 1st St. Birmingham, Ala.	June 14, 1906	
1/30/26	James Harrison Hughes	365 S. 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	Dec. 13, 1906	
1/30/26	James Jackson	247 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	Nov. 10, 1906	
1/30/26	James Jackson	5819 W. 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	July 26, 1901	
1/30/26	John D. Cook	3609 N. 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	Jan. 28, '03	
1/30/26	John D. Cook	1430 W. 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	May 1, 1906	
1/31/26	Emily D. Cook	1922 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	Feb. 21, '03	
2/1/26	Paul Jackson	716 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	Mar. 13,	
2/1/26	Robert W. Cook	2297 E. 1st St. Chicago, Ill.	June 15,	

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Appendix D



OFFICIAL CATALOGUE

Eleventh Annual

California Spring Garden Show

May 1st to 5th, 1940

Preview Evening April 30th

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ABE P. LEACH

California Spring Garden Show, Inc.

The 1940 California Spring Garden Show represents the cumulative effort of the Pacific Coast to build a permanent flower and garden exhibition for the western section of the United States. And, within eleven years, the Garden Show has expanded to the point where it now receives international recognition.

The event is made possible by the unselfish devotion of citizens, organized in horticultural associations and informal garden clubs, as well as nurserymen and owners of private estates, who have combined their energies in the spirit of community enterprise.

The exhibition is unique in that the individual exhibits are harmonized to present a unified picture or "theme" of unusual beauty, covering some 45,000 square feet within the spacious Exposition Building of Oakland. The 1940 theme, "Gardens of Fairyland," is the second mystical subject portrayed in the medium of flowers. The motif, "Shangri-La," taken from James Hilton's novel, "Lost Horizon," was used as the 1939 Spring Garden Show theme, with a result so appealing that over 100,000 visitors thronged the Exposition Building.

"Gardens of Fairyland" are designed to exemplify the charm of a "Midsummer Night's Dream," in which such devices of landscape artistry as fountains, statues of the regal Titania, arches wreathed with climbing roses in bloom, and murals depicting glimpses of a legendary world complement the loveliness of flowers.

It was in 1929 that a group of Oakland gardening enthusiasts conceived the idea of producing a show. Their intention was to vary their venture from the current trend in floral displays by introducing garden scenes in which flowering plants would be shown growing in artistic beds within an attractive landscape. Mr. Howard Gilkey, landscape architect and designer of the California Spring Garden Show for many years, was of this original group, as were Elsie Gilkey, the late Harold Austin, Arthur E. Navlet, William F. Steinmetz, A. F. Schulte, Henry M. Butterfield, R. C. Bitterman and Joseph L. Callaghan. The latter has often been referred to as the "father" of the California Spring Garden Show. During the first years, his support was one of the chief reasons for the Show's amazing success, and his guidance throughout its history has been of inestimable value.

The first California Spring Garden Show appeared in 1930, the sponsors charging no admission. It was held in the Earle C. Anthony Building, through the courtesy of Mr. Anthony. Over 47,000 people attended and many others were turned away. Thus it was proved that the public felt the need of a garden show, rather than the cut flower type of exposition then in vogue. In fact, many people made voluntary contributions, in the hope of encouraging a more lavish display for the following year.

With a second show in view, the problem of finding adequate space was submitted to Redmund C. Staats, then chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Alameda County, who made the suggestion that an admission fee be charged. Mr. Staats advised the sponsors to make use of the Civic Auditorium, and it was here that the second

California Spring Garden Show was held.

It so happened that the design of the second presentation of garden scenes showed a Renaissance tendency. As a consequence, the 1932 Show was developed with a definite theme in mind, being called "Gardens of the Alhambra."

By 1932, public interest made it necessary to seek larger quarters. The new Exposition Building, with twice the capacity of the Auditorium, had been recently completed, and it was chosen as the future home of the California Spring Garden Show.

The "Semi-Formal Gardens" of 1933 were followed, during subsequent years, by "Gardens of the Orient," "Manor Gardens of England" and "Chateau Gardens of France."

In contrast to the historical themes, the 1937 Show was designed as "Nature's Gardens." The immense appeal of the wild vista, which included mountain cascades roaring over giant rocks, and hillsides covered with the rosy blooms of rhododendrons and azaleas, brought a repetition of the same theme, with variations in design for the 1938 California Spring Garden Show.

Coincident with the floral interpretation of "Shangri-La," last year, which made evident the possibilities of the legendary theme, a radical change was made in size of the Show. It was extended beyond the interior pageant, to include approximately three-fourths of an acre out of doors. This was given over to garden clubs of northern California. To each group was assigned the pleasant task of creating a small model garden, replete with suggestions for beautifying the outdoor surroundings of the average home.

At this point, a third section was included, namely the *marque*, which houses the trade exhibits of national manufacturers of gardening equipment and accessories. Arthur M. Crugar, who joined the show officials last year, as business manager, has this section under his personal supervision and, in addition, acts as general business manager for the organization.

This year an elaborate illustrated catalogue has been edited by Dr. T. Harper Goodspeed, Professor of Botany and Director of Botanical Garden, University of California, and prepared for publication by Mr. Crugar.

Among over 100 floral exhibits of extraordinary charm, that of the University of California Botanical Garden always attracts much notice. Discoveries of a Botanical Garden exploring expedition to the Himalayas and to temperate South America of Joseph F. Rock are included in this year's exhibit.

Another display of rare and unusual plants is offered by the California Horticultural Society, whose activity in introducing new material has resulted in many unique additions to California gardens.

Professional flower arrangements of exquisite design are always included in a separate section of the Exposition Building, while the Cut Flower Section enlists the special interest of the home gardener. Here he may exhibit his home-grown blooms, with hope of winning an award.

(Turn to Page 18)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Continued from Page 17)

Cash prizes, totaling approximately \$10,000, go to the winners in the various classifications, making it possible for the exhibitors to meet, in part at least, the expense involved in creating the individual displays. Prizes awarded to winning exhibitors come from the California State Pari-Mutuel Race-Track Fund, and are authorized and allotted to the Show by the First District Agricultural Association, of which Bestor Robinson is president. Directors of this Association include Dr. Warren Allen, Joseph L. Callaghan, M. G. Callaghan, Peter Hoare, Phil C. Riley and Hollis R. Thompson.

The steady growth of the Show has been due, in large measure, to the financial support received from the Board of Supervisors of Alameda County, as well as the Council of the City of Oakland.

The Board of Directors of the California Spring Garden Show has insisted that the organization remain non-commercial throughout its history, thus perpetuating the ideal of community enterprise which distinguishes the endeavor. All proceeds of one show are reserved toward the end of creating a more elaborate spectacle for the following spring.

The Board of Directors meets each week throughout the year, the services of all members being donated. It has been my pleasure to preside over this energetic organization for a number of years. Other members of the Board are Walter H. Clark, secretary-treasurer; R. C. Bitterman, O. Homer Bryan, Julius O. Dohrmann, Edward T. Faulkes, Dr. T. Harper Goodspeed, Arthur E. Navlet, William F. Steinmetz and A. F. Shulte.

Appendix E



TOICHI DOMOTO, NURSEYMAN
Over sixty years experience with flowers

Wm. E. Schmidt, Portola Valley, California

For as far back as he can recall, to earliest childhood, Toichi Domoto was among flowers. Ornamental plants literally have been his whole life and he intends to enjoy their company for many years to come when his plans for retirement are resolved — soon, he hopes.

Toichi was virtually born among flowers on December 11, 1902, in his parents' home at the Domoto Bros. Nursery. As he grew up in the nursery, he often went along on horse-drawn delivery wagons, a small boy sitting proudly "up front." Later he made a number of day-long trips from the nursery in Fitchburg (now 78th Avenue and Olive Street, Oakland) to delivery points in San Francisco, as far as Castro Street or out to Fillmore

Street. The two-horse express wagon would leave the nursery in the dark early morning hours, get on a ferry for San Francisco, make the deliveries and usually get back in the middle or late afternoon.

This early association with plants actually links the horse-and-buggy days of the nursery business in this area to the present, or so-called jet age. As Toichi comments: "For me that's all there was to do. When I was small, I played in the Domoto Bros. Nursery. As I grew up, I worked in the nursery. Later I started my own nursery."

How did the Domoto Bros. Nursery, where Toichi learned how to grow plants, get its own start? What was it like through the years of transitions? For that we'll have to go back to June

10, 1867, or perhaps it was 1866, when Toichi's father, Kanezaro Domoto, was born in Wakayama Ken in Japan. Dates of those early years are not known exactly, for many records have been lost.

When he was only sixteen years old, Kanezaro and a brother came to the United States, arriving in Seattle. Next year, 1883, finds him in San Francisco. With little knowledge of English and in need of a job, he began as a kitchen helper at the Palace Hotel. Sometime later he worked in the gardens of the Adolph Sutro estate, now Sutro Heights Park, overlooking Seal Rocks and the beach in San Francisco.

About this time he entered his first business venture by importing a quantity of Unshiu or Satsuma oranges from Japan (no import restrictions in those years!). The novel fruits reached San Francisco in good condition and sold well. But a second and bigger repeat shipment arrived totally rotted and he "lost his shirt," as he recalled later.

Undaunted, he and another brother, Motonoshin, started a small nursery in Oakland, about where Third and Grove Streets are now. This was a success and in a few years, in the late 1880's, they bought four acres of land on Central Avenue and East 14th Street in East Oakland. This is now 35th Avenue and East 14th Street, in the Melrose district of Oakland. Subsequently, in the 1890's, they added four more acres to the property.

Here the two brothers soon established a range of greenhouses and lath-houses. Their main business was the growing of chrysanthemums and carnations in the greenhouses for cut flowers. They also raised some seasonal flowering plants in pots.

By 1890 they were importing plants from Japan that were shipped during the dormant season. They also brought in Australian specialties, imported forcing azaleas from Belgium and bulbs from Holland for forcing in pots

or as cut flowers. Among their earliest importations of camellias from Japan was *Camellia japonica* 'Usu-Otome,' which Toichi's father renamed 'Pink Perfection.'

By this time the brothers had acquired new first names and were known far and wide in the trade as Tom (or Thomas K.) for Kanezaro Domoto, and Henry for his brother Motonoshin Domoto. They also more or less divided the responsibilities of the thriving nursery. Henry managed the cut flowers and the selling end, while Tom took on the growing of ornamental shrubs, trees and pot plants such as coleus, pelargonium, holiday peppers, poinsettias and Easter lilies.

For this article Toichi loaned me his much-used copy of the forty page *Descriptive Catalogue of Japanese Plants and Shrubs*, issued by the "Domoto Bros. Proprietors" in 1892. It has no illustrations and some of the botanical names are, of course, different from those we have for the same plants today. The catalogue is fascinating, not only for the curious spelling and terms, but particularly for the great variety of ornamental plants listed. A surprising number of them are considered "new" in 1892!

The inside cover is devoted to "How to Reach Our Nursery." It describes in detail how to get to the Domoto Bros. Nursery in East Oakland from any direction by such means as "Broad or Narrow Gauge" (Oakland and S.F. R.R.) ferry, "Hayward electric car," "Oakland and Berkeley electric car," and even "Overland train."

The "General List of Plants" almost at once starts out with a most remarkable offer of *Acer palmatum*: "Acer Polyporphum — Japanese Maple. 35 varieties." This is followed by a listing of various sizes and prices, from 35¢ to 75¢ each. (These are all retail prices). The offer continues: "4 or 6 kinds grafted on one stalk each 50¢; per dozen \$4.50; per 100 \$35. Two stalks growing together and twisted, grafted from 5 to 7 kinds on stalk,

each 75¢; per dozen \$6.00; 10 to 12 different kinds on stalk, \$1.25 to \$1.50."

Reading on, to azaleas in many varieties, *Camellia japonica* in four colors and *C. sasanqua*, five varieties; we notice "*Cedria chinensis*," two species of shrub deciduous, corylopsis, and we come to *Cryptomeria japonica*.

This is followed by a listing of eight named varieties, such as "*Cryptomeria Yenko* — Cord-like foliage, weeping nature. Height 1 to 1½ feet, each 35¢; per dozen \$2.75." Other cryptomerias have foliage described as: "Silver white foliage;" "Twined cock and comb shapes, very curious;" "Chain like, drooping," and "Slender growth, in shape like peacock tail." Prices from 25¢ to \$1.25 each. Less by the dozen.

Four fuchsia varieties are named: E. G. Hill, Storm King, Phenomenal and "Sun Ray" — A beautiful red variegated foliage and red single flowers; and many more varieties. Each 15¢; per dozen \$1.50."

Among numerous other plants there follow eight different magnolias; a white-berried *Nandina domestica*; many colors in tree peonies; flowering peaches and flowering apricots, with double and single flowers and in white, pink, red and variegated, respectively.

Fifteen species and varieties of "Climbing Plants" include four wisterias, one of which is "Two kinds on the stalk, blue and white; each \$1.00 to \$1.25."

The selection of over fifty species and varieties of ferns includes seven species of tree ferns, the latter from \$3.50 to \$7.50 each for established plants. There are seventeen species of palms; thirty-four varieties of *Pelargonium domesticum*, listing at least seven names known in the trade of today.

Among roses offered and described are twenty-five "Hybrid Perpetual Roses," including "General Jacqueminot, 25¢" and "Paul Neyron, 15¢ to 25¢;" seventeen "Climbing and No-

sette Roses" include "Marechal Niel, 20¢ to 30¢" and "Lady Banksia, 15¢ to 20¢;" forty-nine "Everblooming Tea and Hybrid" include "La France, 15¢ to 25¢" and "Papa Gontier, 25¢ to 35¢" and thirty "Bourbon Roses" including "Rainbow" (California New Rose) — "... color bright pink, striped and splashed with brilliant crimson in handsome way, 25¢ to 35¢."

Chrysanthemum plants were their great specialty. Twelve pages name and describe over two hundred varieties of all types, shapes and colors, including "Grand Japanese and California Varieties introduced in 1892," at 30¢ each and "Choice Eastern Varieties, introduced in 1892," at 25¢ each. General collection varieties are priced at 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ each.

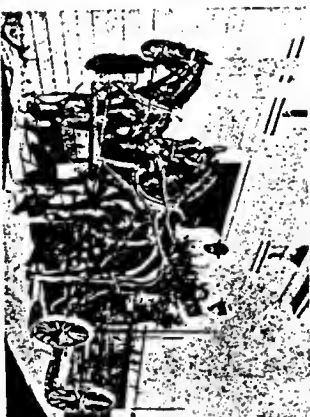
The last three pages are devoted to "Japanese Fruit Trees" and include nut trees, "Persimmon (or Japanese Date Plum)" is described in detail and priced: "3 to 4 feet high; per dozen \$1.50; per 100 \$8.00." Plums "3 feet high; per dozen \$2.00; per 100 \$12.00." A "Mammoth Chestnut," also a "Japan Walnut," the latter at 40¢ each, per dozen \$4.00. Among others are a "Japan Quince" and "Loquat Japonica;" eight kinds of citrus, described in detail, with average size three feet high and priced at 50¢ each; \$5.00 per dozen. Three berries conclude the list, including the new raspberry-like "Japan Wineberry" — "... rich wine-colored berries thickly covered with purplish hairs; flavor sweet and juicy, 25¢ each, \$2.50 per dozen." Toichi states that from 1890 to 1910 the Domoto Bros. Nursery imported many thousands of fruit trees, nut trees and citrus trees each year from Japan, of many more varieties than are listed in this catalogue.

Especially notable is the extensive collection of variegated plants offered in this catalogue of 1892. There are at least thirty-six kinds and, beside familiar ones, such unusual plants as "Gardenia Pleno" — Variegated foliage with

yellow;" "Ginkgo Variegata" — Variegated with yellow and white, a rare variety; "*Podocarpus macrophylla* Variegata;" *Terminalia japonica* "Variegata;" *Kadsura japonica* "Variegata;" *Scadophrys verticillata* "Variegata" and "Rhapis Filabelliformis Variegata" — Very rare variety."

A final note of special interest is that, even as early as 1892, the Domoto brothers were also importing large specimen plants. An example in this catalogue is *Cycas revoluta*, of which they list small plants from 25¢ to medium ones for \$3.00 each, but also offer: "Height 6 to 7 feet, 34 to 37 inches circumference, \$30 to \$65, according to size or weight."

Tom Domoto made a trip to Japan and was married there on June 29, 1899. He brought his bride to East Oakland and established a home on the nursery grounds. There Toichi was born in 1902, and eventually was joined by two brothers and eight sisters.



Before the 1906 earthquake, this wagon was the market place for many flower growers in the Bay Area, hauling the Domoto Brothers' flowers to San Francisco.

During those years the Domoto brothers were leaders in the cut flower and potted plant business, as attested by two old photographs reproduced for this article. The two photos and the legends are by courtesy of the Magazine of the California State Florists' Association.

About this time the area surrounding the nursery property started to build up with homes and so on November 11, 1902, a month before Toichi was born, the brothers bought forty-eight acres in the Fitchburg district of Oakland, where 78th Avenue and Olive Street meet now. They called this place the "New Ranch." Here they put up twenty-five greenhouses, each 28 feet by 200 feet and raised cut roses and carnations in them. The final move from the nursery on 55th Avenue to the "New Ranch" was made in 1910, when Toichi was eight years old.



Lick Place: The growers of Japanese descent rented space at 31 Lick Place for a market. In the beginning, the Domoto brothers, whose store occupied the corner, subsidized the rent for the growers when the going was rough.

Toichi remembers that during those years the Domoto Bros. Nursery received, via railroad from New York, boxcar loads of English laurals, Grecian laurels or bay trees and boxwoods imported from Holland. These were four to seven feet tall, all trained in pyramids, globes, standards (tree form) and other shapes (including what the trade now calls "poodles"). Each one was grown and shipped in a fancy, painted wooden planter box. "They were the devil to unload from the box cars," he recalls.

Importations of new plants continued and in 1913 they brought in from Japan plants of a double-flowered

Hydrangea macrophylla (*H. obtata*). Tom Domoto named this form 'Domotoi' and when the brothers exhibited an outdoor bed of it at the Pan-Pacific International Exposition in 1915, *H. macrophylla* 'Domotoi' was awarded a gold medal.

Their heavy imports in 1913 and 1914, particularly of plants to be used at the 1915 Exposition, proved to be the last of their kind. First, World War I was the main deterrent, but the clincher proved to be Nursery Stock Plant and Seed Quarantine 37. This law was promulgated shortly after and under the authority of the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912 and stopped all unlimited importations.

Thereafter the Domoto Bros. Nursery imported only limited numbers of camellias, azaleas, chamaecyparis and other materials for propagation. From Japan they continued to bring in quantities of Easter lily bulbs, of a *Lilium giganteum* strain, for forcing. These were shipped in wooden boxes holding from one hundred to three hundred bulbs, depending on bulb size, and were tightly packed in yellow clay. Eventually *L. giganteum* strains replaced *L. candidum* as the forced Easter lily.

Another gold medal exhibit at the Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 was the collection of Kurume azaleas sent by the Japanese nurseryman, Kojiro Akashi. There were thirty plants in a dozen varieties and after the Exposition the Domoto brothers bought some of them. In 1916, they imported their first Kurume azaleas. In 1917, Tom Domoto went to Japan and obtained exclusive sales rights for Kurume azaleas in the United States from the association of growers of these azaleas in Kurume, prefecture of Fukuoka. During the next four years Domoto Bros. Nursery brought in well over ten thousand Kurume azaleas and introduced twenty-five varieties including such well known ones as Pink Pearl, Coral Bells and Cherry Blossom.

In 1917, the year Toichi graduated from Lockwood Grammar School in East Oakland, the nursery bought its first truck, a 1½-ton Denby, with flat, solid-rubber tires. They turned in six horses as down payment! That year the Domoto Bros. Nursery officially became Domoto Bros., Inc., in order to live with the anti-alien Land Law restrictions.

Toichi Domoto graduated in 1921 from the Fremont High School in the Metrose district of Oakland. He went to Stanford University from 1921 to 1923 and graduated in floriculture from the University of Illinois in February, 1926.

Following graduation he continued to work for Domoto Bros., Inc. and in 1927 bought twenty-six acres of land in Hayward, where his nursery is still located today. The same year he built the first lathhouse there.

Now he worked only part-time at Domoto Bros., Inc., in order to have time to start his own nursery. At first he raised mostly camellias and some dahlias, azaleas and tree peonies. He marketed the plants for the next three years through Domoto Bros., Inc. In 1929, Toichi imported named varieties of tree peonies from Japan and France.

For some years now, Domoto Bros., Inc. had been under the pressures of urbanization and was forced to sell part of the nursery property. That and the deep depression following the crash of 1929 contributed to the closing of Domoto Bros., Inc. in 1930.

Toichi Domoto was entirely on his own now and began to sell the plants he raised directly to home gardeners and to nurseries. He branched into specimen plants and in the course of years developed a noted selection of them. That year he sold his first lathhouse-grown camellia cut flowers.

In 1931 he imported named varieties of flowering quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*) from Japan. His goal in crossing them was to get lower growing plants with flowers that were

more double; he also worked for more colors in the corolla form of the flowering quince. In two or three years he had several thousand seedlings started that would bloom in a few more years. Toichi says that, in retrospect, he was not successful in reaching his breeding goals with the flowering quinces.

During 1936 he imported scions of *Camellia reticulata* 'Captain Rawes' from Hillier & Sons, Winchester, England. Almost all died when grafted by the methods he used, so he next imported grafted plants from Hilliers. These were 12 feet to 18 feet high, grafted in various ways, including whip and side grafts. Toichi says that the idea of cleft grafts on heavy understock of camellias, now used so much in California, came from the southern states in the 1940's. In 1936, Toichi named and introduced *Camellia japonica* 'Cho-Cho-San' to the trade.

Also in 1936 he imported all the varieties of yellow tree peony hybrids available from Lemoine in France. The best three of these have been quite popular, especially with flower arrangers. That year and through 1938 he imported a few each of many varieties of *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sasanqua* from Japan.

The tree peonies he imported from Japan and France in 1929 were well established by now and in 1936 and 1937 he collected and planted quantities of the seeds in open seedbeds. They took up to two years to germinate and stayed another year in the seedbeds. They were planted out in 1939 and 1940, mostly by machine, in long rows in the open field — as there were about 50,000 of them.

It was also in 1940 that he brought in a large collection of named Higois from Mr. Wada, a specialist in Japan. The new plants of this improved strain of Japanese iris (*Iris kaempferi*) were also planted out in the fields. During this year and in

1941 he also imported plants of double-flowered gerberas from India and got seeds of the doubles from German, Japanese and southern California specialists. All the resulting seedlings were planted out in spring 1942, next to the plants from India.

By far the biggest event for Toichi Domoto in 1940 was his marriage on August 31 to Alice Okamoto, who was born in Oregon and grew up in Los Angeles. They have one daughter, who is married and lives in Seattle, and one son who is graduating in medicine from Yale this year.

All was going well for Toichi. He was already widely known as a specialist in camellias and his nursery featured the best and the latest varieties of camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons, deciduous magnolias, choice conifers and bonsai plants. The flowering quince seedlings from the crosses he had made in the middle 1930's had been coming into bloom for several years and now he selected two, a double red and a double white one, for propagation and introduction. During that year of 1941 he also planted his first greenhouse with big camellia plants for cut flower production (cottage flowers).

Then came Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, and with it great hardship for those of Japanese descent on the Pacific coast. All were evacuated to inland camps in the spring of 1942. Toichi spent the first year in the Merced, California, Assembly Center and in the Amache Relocation Center in Granada, Colorado. Because of his reputation as a camellia specialist, he got a job in 1943 with Schramm's Greenhouses, Crystal Lake, Illinois, where roses, gardenias and camellias were grown under glass for cut flowers. He stayed with Schramm's until the end of the war.

Within one month, in 1943, Tom Domoto died in Granada, Colorado (in October) and Henry Domoto died in Minneapolis (in November). During the war years Toichi's nur-

servy was taken care of by an employee, Peter Milian, who managed it until Toichi's return. Even though Peter worked full time, with his wife helping, and though he hired extra help off-and-on, he could barely keep the many acres of field-grown stock weeded and watered. Some plants were lost, such as most of the double gerberas and the Higo lilies. "I was lucky," Toichi says in all sincerity, "Peter Milian is an honest and wonderful fellow and had my nursery in good shape when I got back."

Toichi returned to his nursery in the spring of 1946. Some of the fifty thousand tree peony seedlings he had planted out in 1939 and 1940 began to bloom that spring. A few stragglers made it in 1947. From this huge population of seedlings Toichi selected the very finest as stockplants for vegetative propagation. That, however, turned out to be a difficult problem and still has not been resolved.

In June, 1946, plant patents No. 700 and No. 701 were granted for the flowering quinces 'Double Red' and 'Double White' that he had selected in 1941 from his thousands of seedlings.

Toichi concentrated on building up his stock with the latest varieties in his major specialties, camellias and azaleas. The great spring feature at the nursery for years have been the tree peonies in bloom. His wide selection of specimen trees and shrubs, especially in varieties not usually available, was further expanded. Also more bonsai plants were acquired.

The years 1945 to 1948 saw the greatest demand for cut camellia flowers used by florists for corsage work. By now Toichi had an excellent crop of them each season in three greenhouses, together covering twenty thousand square feet. He shipped them as "tailored" flowers (each flower was prepared with a collar of fresh camellia leaves, ready to wear), mostly to Chicago. Demand for camellia cut

flowers has declined since the late 1940's and is quite low now, Toichi says.

He had been watching a fimbriated sport of *Camellia japonica* 'Mathotiana' for some years and finally decided to introduce it. He named it 'Flowerwood' and in 1951 was granted plant patent No. 1074 for it. Two years later, in 1953, Toichi named and introduced his most famous camellia, 'Shiro Chan,' a near-white sport of 'C. M. Wilson.' In 1959 he named and introduced the fine, large, white variety, 'Beckfield,' a seedling of *C. japonica* raised by Mrs. Ecklefield of Livingston, California.

In recent years Toichi has gradually limited his retail trade by not advertising and now concentrates on wholesale sales of his plants. He keeps up on the latest in the nursery industry and has held active memberships in professional and horticultural organizations; he has held office in some of them.

Toichi is successfully keeping his hand in the work of selecting and hybridizing. He has again worked up a good block of the double-flowered gerberas and is not only propagating the finest by division, but also by seeds for more and clearer colors.

He grows some camellia seedlings and is now trying to get true miniatures — plants of small stature, with small leaves and small flowers.

His big interest now is the hybridizing and selecting of naturally trailing azaleas, and they look promising. Originally, in the early 1930's he gathered seeds from a plant of *Rhododendron indicum* 'Daikagura.' This plant is better known as *Azalea macrantha* 'Daikagura' (Mime. Butterfly), with rather small single flowers, white, deepening to orangy-salmon at petal edges. Some years later he selected from the resulting seedlings one of trailing habit, but with lavender-purple flowers. This one he crossed with

TOICHI DOMOTO, NURSEYMAN — Wm. E. Schmidt (Continued from page 72)

other varieties and from those seedlings got two natural trailers. One is a deep salmon pink and the other a single white.

This year (1969) the latest generation of these trailing azalea crosses came into bloom. From the six hundred seedlings, Toichi picked out several plants with the best natural trailing habit and with colors of flowers he can introduce or use for further improvements.

When he finally retires from the nursery business, Toichi Domoto will still have plants to work with, for he admits that he already has a few choice selections of camellias, azaleas, tree peonies, flowering quinces and others "strashed away around my house." Also a few old bonsai plants," he says, "that I'm keeping for their artistic form or for sentimental reasons" — to keep him company, for many years to come.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOICHI DOMOTO

Conducted by
Suzanne Riess
in 1981

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Toichi Domoto, "An Interview with Toichi Domoto," an oral history conducted 1981 by Suzanne Riess, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1982.

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I DOMOTO BROTHERS NURSERY

[Interview 1: May 26, 1981]##

Riess: Yours is the name that always comes up in relation to Filoli, no other supplier.

Domoto: The other ones that were supplying services there--did Mrs. Roth mention, while I think about it, a tree service man from Davey?

Riess: No, they used Davey?

Domoto: I think he was connected with Davey or they may not have used Davey, but he was a Davey-trained man, let's put it that way, and I think he lives in Palo Alto. We can supplement if I find out because this man was probably advising them along in the fifties, I guess. I don't think before that. There was someone else before [Leslie] Thiringer.

Riess: [Louis] Moraconi?

Domoto: No, Moraconi is [not it]. He was the last of the--there was another--

Riess: Do you mean as head gardener?

Domoto: Head gardener, yes. Moraconi was in charge of the Italian group there, more or less in the bedding plant group, but as far as I remember, I don't think he was in charge of the full yard area.

Customers

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended.

- Domoto: We supplied--my father's nursery, Domoto Brothers, Inc., and Toichi Domoto Nursery--plants to Filoli long before I got to meet Mrs. Roth, because it went through Miss Worn. A lot of it Miss Worn would pick up in her own truck and take it on down.
- Riess: So you were sort of wholesaling to Miss Worn?
- Domoto: Miss Worn, yes, and not knowing where they were going, just like a lot of the plants she was buying went to the Hearst estate at San Simeon, and after she bought them, "Well, this is going to the Hearst estate." Her idea when she was dealing with my dad--see, Dad was the old school: if he knew that someone wealthy was going to buy it, maybe the price would go up! [laughs]
- Riess: Really, that is the old school? That sounds like the new school, too, I'm sure!
- Domoto: I've forgotten who the Piedmont customer was that came down one day in an old car. Dad said, "What is the matter? Did your other car break down?" He said, "No, I thought if I came in this car, you would give me a better price!" [laughter] Those were the days of the Pierce Arrows and the Locomobiles--that was a prestige car in those days. If they came in a Pierce Arrow, you know that they had the wealth to go with it.
- Riess: But plant materials seemed very, very cheap then. Is it relative or were they very cheap?
- Domoto: No, good materials were still high. Yet as far as it was cheap in the point of view of the dollar, but then you figure out a person working all day is only getting a dollar.
- Riess: Yes, but in this article, when the maples were 35 cents and a hundred for \$35.
- Domoto: Yes, but you are only getting a dollar a day.
- Riess: But your trade was not the dollar a day trade.

Japanese Gardeners

* "Toichi Domoto, Nurseryman," by William E. Schmidt, California Horticultural Journal, Vol. XXX, No. 3, July 1969.

Domoto: No, but your help--that means your economy is at that point, so that your trade and everything, they are thinking in those terms. We have the trouble right now even, the older generation, they will say, "Hey, Domoto, find me a good Japanese gardener or a gardener who knows something about it."

I say, "Yes, I can find you one probably, but I won't promise you anything."

"Oh, I get gardeners but they don't know anything."

I say, "The ones that know are going to cost you some money."

He says, "How much?" Well, they are used to thinking in terms of the prewar or postwar when their gardeners, they got two and a half or three dollars an hour they thought they were paying them a good price. Now if a gardener charges him six to ten dollars for just pushing the lawn mower they think they are getting robbed. Yet they will go to the garage or a plumber--

Riess: Oh sure, but we know we're getting robbed by the plumber! [laughs] But actually there are gardeners and gardeners. I mean if it is just going to be mowing the lawn, then would you expect that gardener to know plant materials?

Domoto: They should, but unfortunately they don't. Too many of the young ones that have gone in either are of a group that had no other openings and went in for gardening either because economy-wise or else--I hate to put it this way--mentally they are not sufficient enough to do anything else but pushing the lawn mower.

Riess: You are saying this is almost traditionally the case?

Domoto: No, the original Japanese gardener that came here, they had nothing that they could go into that was better. So I would say that their I.Q., if such a thing can be measured, was higher and not only that, I think their interest was a lot more intense because their livelihood depended on being able to keep that job. You don't have a welfare state to depend on. If they didn't get that job, they would have to go back [to Japan]. They can't say, "I'm hungry. I need an extra few dollars for my family." There was nothing like that.

Riess: What was your father like? A real entrepreneur it sounds like.

- Domoto: Yes, and then I think of what they did. We talk about the older--the second--generation, those that did make a name for themselves, when we think back to what they did, why, I don't think any of us would have had the guts to do what they did or the way they did it. They were really gamblers.
- Riess: Was the community very supportive when your father took the risk of starting the nursery?
- Domoto: No, no, they were really anti. They had to buck everything. It was the only way.
- Riess: Was there a Japanese community already?
- Domoto: No, when my father came there was no Japanese community, just a small [group], very small in 1883.
- Riess: So he took a risk at the beginning.
- Domoto: Yes. Most of the plants that came were unknown here. The fact that plants were coming in from Japan, [there was] interest in plants from Japan, and then the plants from Europe, probably the salesmen from those countries were good and that is the way they came in, started in.

Bulb Salesmen

- Riess: I wondered how he got his connections with the bulb dealers in Holland.
- Domoto: The Hollanders used to send their salesmen over every year and it used to be quite a thing. Each bulb company would try to send their bulb salesman in. They were supposed to leave at about the same time. Of course, there were no planes. There were boats and, of course, there could only be a certain number of boats coming in. Then the Transcontinental and the Pacific Coast, there was a race to see who was going to hit the market first. They know which of the growers buy the most bulbs, so they will try to hit him first and see if they can get the bulk of the bulb order. That was the race for the Dutch bulbs.

The plant business before quarantine was mostly not so much Hollanders but the Belgians.

- Riess: That was the azaleas?

Domoto: The azaleas, English bays, Araucarias, they were all grown trees. They would come in by boat to New York and then come overland by freight all crated up and then they would uncrate them and they would use them like in the front of the Palace Hotel, the Fairmont Hotel in those days, some hotels even bigger--most of the hotels, very few apartments, and even the private residences would all have these--you see in some of the old pictures these Bay trees, *Laurus nobilis*, those were the standards or pyramids. They came all ready in these cedar tubs, already grown.

Riess: At that point, your father had his catalogue?

Domoto: Yes, he had put out a catalogue earlier. They were sort of an import catalogue and evidently what they did was, the orders were taken against the import stock and as the stock came in, the orders were filled. In the fall of the season when they came in, the orders would be filled as they arrived. So actually, my father's letterhead used to read "importers and exporters."

The Persimmon

Domoto: A lot of the things he did [was] import work, mail order. For instance, the things that came in any quantity were like persimmons, chestnuts, some of the fruit trees, like the pears, but mainly the biggest amount of that type of fruit was some of the varieties of persimmons and some of the prunes. Then even they bought some of the oranges, the Satsuma oranges. In the other ornamental line, we would get quantities of camellias.

Riess: Let me stop you for a second on the fruit and ask whether this was the introduction here of Japanese persimmons?

Domoto: Oh yes.

Riess: Through your father's business?

Domoto: Yes. They were sold to other nurseries like, oh, Fancher Creek, in Fresno. There is a nursery up in Newcastle, Fowler, I think. Those are some of the nurseries. Then down south into the Los Angeles area. Actually, I guess the commercial--others may have imported some, I don't know. But I know that my father was importing a lot of those original persimmons into the states for distribution.

Riess: For home gardens?

Domoto: No, for commercial planters. So some of the original plantings in California were from trees that my father imported.

Riess: Did they know the range of conditions that the persimmon would grow under?

Domoto: No, a lot of it was experimental. But by that time some of the orchardists had Japanese foremen or men working for them on the crew. So because of that they would know about planting, but a lot of it was experimental. Then also the USDA was interested in the persimmons, like they were in bamboo shoots--bamboo we imported.

Up at Chico, they had I have forgotten how many varieties of persimmon at the USDA Experiment Station. They had pretty near every variety of persimmon they could find from Japan as a test to try out for the area and at one time, the ones that came from Japan originally were all grafted on persimmons understock. Then they found out somewhere along the line that the persimmon understock takes too long to come into fruit and it was hard to transplant. So then they went into a cousin, one they called the lotus, a related tree for understock here in California. Now they are going back to the persimmon again because they say that the lotus is not really compatible, the tree is short-lived and the fruit isn't quite as good. So they are going back to the older persimmon understock again.

But Chico, and this is back in it must have been in the fifties. It was before that, I guess. I know that some of those trees may still be there. They had one large persimmon that the man in charge (I've forgotten his name now) said that they just had finished picking over a half a ton of fruit from that one tree.

Riess: That's amazing. I have a persimmon and the trunk is so weak that I have to keep cutting that tree back.

Domoto: No, this trunk goes about that wide. I don't know what the spread was, but they got the big fruit from there, and every year since they've been up there--the heads of the department used to be shifted around from different stations--they said they were sending a box to the President, and boxes to the secretaries of agriculture and commerce. I said, "Do you mean all of those?" "Oh no, not all of them, but certain ones." Then, of course, no air. It had to be shipped by railway express and it would be at least five days on the road--at least that; more likely a week. They were really--I never saw them that big. Of course, they would pick out the biggest ones.

Riess: Oh, and they are so beautiful. Then they would have to send along somebody to educate all of these people about when you eat a persimmon, when it's ripe.

Domoto: Probably over there, when they got them they would probably look at them and then, of course, they have a Japanese embassy, or the consulate people that they could find out what to do with them, or else probably they just came with somebody to look at it, admire or have some fun puckering them.

Speaking of educating, I was in Illinois in school and my folks sent me some persimmons, both Fuyus and Hachiyas. My roommate, when the box came in, I didn't recognize the Fuyus right away and I started to bite into it (and I had a few Hachiyas in the box). He said, "What are those?"

I said, "Persimmons."

He kept watching my face and he said, "Toichi, you are a damn good actor but you can't fool me!"

I said, "Okay," and I kept eating one. When I got through, he said, "No, there is something else to it. Can I try one?"

I said, "Sure." He bit into it, and pretty soon he sort of laughed. Then one of the other fraternity brothers came in and he said, "What are you eating?"

"Persimmons."

"Ooh!"

"Yes," I said, "do you want to try one?"

"Nah! It's too good for those guys!" [laughter]

But that was the general impression of persimmons and even now it is that way. Persimmons are puckery and if you grow up eating persimmons back there it is the small, native persimmons, the wild persimmons. They say that they have to be real ripe before they are good. Of course, the southern group, they know what they're talking about. They eat persimmons with possum meat cooked together. So it's just a matter of getting educated.

Riess: The experimental work was done by the USDA. How about the University of California Agricultural Extension?

Domoto: No, that is a much later development. That importation work was mostly done by USDA first. Then they had one down in Santa Barbara, too, but they closed that out back in about '35 or '40 when they had to enlarge one of the campuses. They had to knock out a lot of the trees they had there. But they were experimenting with some in Florida, too. The two experiment stations were in Florida and Chico, and some of the early pamphlets or early books on persimmons that the USDA has put out, is from either Chico or Florida. Just like the bamboo. See, they had an idea of growing bamboo for food and also for structural purposes especially in the Louisiana area. But with labor costs and whatever it was too costly.

Quarantine Number 37

Riess: When was the quarantine?

Domoto: That was in '17. But actually there was an embargo before that because the war was on and there was no space available for bringing the plants in. So the actual quarantine, number 37, did not go into effect until '17. But the limitation of imports was already on because of the war. The only way you could get their coming into the States either from the Orient or from Europe was by getting a special permit from the War Trade Board to use the boats coming this way if they had room, and that was very limited.

Then because 37 was going to go in, the nurserymen here were just coming out of World War I and still trying to cope with their home propagation. They were trying to keep [out] the competition that would be coming in from Europe or Asia or wherever that used to come in, that is to work up a home industry in the meantime.

Riess: Are you talking about the non-Japanese nurserymen?

Domoto: Yes, all over the United States; that is, azaleas and conifers and so forth back in the New Jersey area and the New York area and some in California. Not so much in the Midwest--one or two in the Midwest. But it was an industry and they were trying to keep the competition from coming in. Of course, there was a fear of insects and diseases coming in.

Riess: Which do you think was more important though? Which was the real issue?

Domoto: When I come to think back over what happened and the way things are, politics as it is, I would say [pause]--they used the fact that there was a danger of disease coming in as a means of putting quarantine 37 in.

Riess: Yes, I would imagine you would think that. Was there enough warning though so that you could get a really adequate back stock?

Domoto: No, because if you did, then they would say, "Look, disease could come in with that box of stock." So they wanted control over the stock that was coming in already, that would be coming in under the quarantine, so they would have control over that. They had to be brought in and inspected, or come from a country where they had rigid inspection, and then come in for resale. Certain things could be resold right away, others would have to be kept under one or two or three-year post-entry quarantine measures to see if nothing develops on those plants that came in.

Cottage Garden Nursery, Eureka

Domoto: Now, that's where Cottage Garden Nursery in Eureka started. My father, being on the importing side, import licenses--special licenses--were hard to get. Mr. [Charles W.] Ward told my father, "You go to Japan and get all of these. You want so many thousand of this, so many thousand of that, and this and that, all of the things that we are importing in whatever size you could get, the bigger the better; whatever you could get."

[My father] said, "We can't get that permit." He said, "Never mind the permit. I'll get the permit and you go to Japan and get the plants over there."

Riess: Because he had the political power to get the permit?

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: His name was Ward?

Domoto: Yes, Charles W. Ward.

Riess: Was that the case often, that your father went over to pick out the materials.

Domoto: He was in Japan at the time, not only to buy plant material but at wartime there was some war material--junk steel and stuff like that--that could be sold at a profit.

Riess: You father is some smart man! He was in on all of those things?

Domoto: There was--what do you call it, a junkie?--yes, they called him a junkie, in Oakland and San Francisco [that] my father knew. They would get together a bunch of scrap iron and things to send and you could take orders over there. Of course, they had no trouble sending that over, the scrap material.

But Mr. Ward's idea in the Cottage Gardens, which was near Eureka, was to start a new Belgian-Holland concept up there. They were going to grow all of the conifers, the Araucarias.

Riess: Spell that for me. Why don't I know that name?

Domoto: The Norfolk Island pine, Araucaria. Coastal blue spruce, all of the types of conifers that we used to import and the hollies, the English bay, and then bulbs. He was going to grow the Dutch bulbs--the tulips and daffodils and all that sort of thing. Then the azaleas, of course, and rhododendrons, of course, were going to be one of the main things that they were going to raise up there because they figured the climate up there was closest to the climate of Holland and Belgium.

He even started a purebred dairy to get the manure for his nursery operation. The theory was quite good, but probably a little too much for him to oversee at one time. The dairy operation started to fold up because he had a dishonest superintendent or manager or whatever you might call him. Everytime a calf was born, they would substitute a nondescript cow or whatever for a thoroughbred and he would sell the thoroughbred. I think they were Jerseys, I think that was the breed that they were in. But at the time they should have had a nice, big herd, why they just had a mangy, old herd.

So [there was] that and then the bulb deal didn't turn out so good. They found up further north in Washington, in Bellingham, the government started to make some bulb experiments up there. They found the weather condition was better up there. But they didn't go into tulips either. They had trouble. I don't know what line they had, but daffodils they went into pretty heavily, the narcissus group and that area.

II TOICHI DOMOTO'S EDUCATION

Jobs for Japanese

Riess: If there hadn't been the quarantine, do you think that you would have gone into the hybridizing and so on that you did or did the quarantine create a kind of need?

Domoto: Actually, I liked plants in a way, in the beginning. I kind of think back to things that might have influenced me.

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Domoto: I used to like annuals, especially pansies. I know that one of our workers used to raise some pansies at home, just to sell to the different florists, and he brought me a couple of plants in this little four-inch pot and I thought more about that and trying to get some seed to set. I never got it to because I didn't know anything about growing these things. But I enjoyed that more than any of the shrubs that we had. Importing camellias--I didn't know anything about [them]. I clipped all of the buds off of them and I never got a licking for it, but I know I got a lecture for it! [laughter] Of course, they were brought in with the buds to sell.

The other thing possibly, as far as the Japanese are concerned, there weren't too many things that you could go into for a living. By that time I had been talking with several who had already graduated from college with a college degree and [they] had no place to go. But those who were from Japan or ones who had been sent over by the big companies to further their knowledge in the different branches, of course, as soon as they finished their study here they would go back. But the local fellows and the ones who didn't have that connection--like we used to say, "There were more college graduates selling art goods or pumping gas." Grant Avenue, the art goods stores, knicknack stores. They used to have college graduates selling that type of material.

- Domoto: Then the only other outlet was gardening. The carpenters--you had no chance of getting a carpenter's job.
- Riess: The unions were closed.
- Domoto: Yes, so that was the only outlet there was. Even gardening, in the larger construction jobs, there was no new landscaping. There was no room there.
- Riess: Who had that business by then?
- Domoto: Most of that was by the old firms like McRorie and McLaren. McLaren was the father of Golden Gate Park.
- Riess: It sounds like the Scotsmen had that business!
- Domoto: Yes, the Scotch and Irish.
- Riess: Were the Italians taken seriously as gardeners?
- Domoto: The Italians were later. You see, a generation as it comes in, most of the first gardeners around here, the better gardeners that came in as head gardeners, were English, Scotch, Irish, and German because they were the ones that had the training in the European countries that had bigger estates. These larger estates were people of that ancestry, so naturally they would be inclined to--I was trying to think of the name of the fellow that was in charge of Filoli.
- Riess: Yes, in an article about early Filoli, written by Albert Wilson, he talks about Phil Graves. But I don't know that he was the manager.
- Domoto: But I think Graves might have been the man that followed after.
- Riess: This was 1927. [reading] Albert Wilson, "fresh out of Stanford." * Did you know him?

Stanford, and University of Illinois

- Domoto: He was a classmate of mine at Stanford. I started at Stanford, so we were together. In fact, in a class in morphology we used to be together.
- Riess: So with the two years at Stanford, had you thought that you would graduate from Stanford?

*"The Gardens of Filoli," by Albert Wilson, California Horticultural Journal, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, July 1970.

Domoto: Well, I thought so but I was in the group at the beginning of the cycle where they are supposed to have a general interest group instead of a specialized study. In other words, unless you were going into engineering or chemistry or medicine, if you were in anything else, you had to take what they called social--

Riess: Sort of a liberal education?

Domoto: A liberal education, and we were the first class to be--

Riess: Liberally educated!

Domoto: Yes, and then after the two years I found out that I was going to have to study some structural botany or something that wasn't in line with the things that I was going to do. I went back in the fall and I couldn't find anything and all of a sudden I decided to go back to Illinois because they did have a floriculture course. I always felt that college education as such wasn't too practical anyway from what I have seen of the fellows who had come in working for my father. It gave them the ability to be something, but as far as their ability to do things right away it was zero. There was always a conflict there between the fellows who did and didn't go.

Riess: So you had to go as far as Illinois though to get what you needed?

Domoto: That was nearest, yes.

Riess: It had a reputation?

Domoto: They were one of the few universities that was offering a floriculture course. It wasn't a nursery course. It was a floriculture course. It happened that I was working in the summertime for a florist from Chicago, Illinois. His name is Frank Oechslein. He came out for a florist nursery convention in San Francisco, and visited the nursery.

He talked with me and said, "What are you going to do?" I told him what I was going to study.

"Are you going to be a professor?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Ah, you're in the wrong school! You should come to Illinois." That's all he said. He said, "There is a nice school there for horticulture."

Domoto: At that time, we were raising cut flowers and pot plants and the importation part had been cut out altogether. We were still importing bulbs, but that was about the only thing we were able to import to sell and we were starting to try to raise a few camellia plants. But most of the import was just limited to new varieties for propagating stock, not to import to sell right away.

So I thought, "Gee! So far as income was concerned, cut flower business was pretty good." I thought, "Maybe that might be the answer."

Riess: Were you an only child?

Domoto: No, I was the oldest. So after starting the quarter at Stanford I found out I could go to Illinois. They said if I came right away I could get [there] in time for the first big midterm test for that semester. So I packed and went, and I never regretted it.

Because of my connection with the professor there, I was able to get a job during my relocation period with Schramm's Nursery in Illinois because they knew of my camellia knowledge. It so happened that the Schramms were of German descent and they had experienced the same thing that we were going through in World War I.

Riess: How good that that made them sympathetic. People very seldom remember what the Germans went through.

Domoto: Of course, they were young at the time, but they still remembered that part of it. Of course, their parents, those of the older generation--but he remembered pretty much when they went into Chicago at the time some of the things that happened to him. So I was very fortunate in being able to go there.

Cosmopolitan Club

Riess: Did you experience prejudice in Illinois in the late 1920s? There weren't very many Japanese there, were there?

Domoto: No, but in certain areas--of course, social-wise it still was not as heavy as out here on the coast, but still. [laughs] Some of the funny things! How narrow people think.

Domoto: I was president of the Cosmopolitan Club. We were going through initiation with the young freshmen that we were going to pledge. Of course, when you are in the Cosmopolitan Club you have a lot of students from other countries. So naturally, initiation would never be the kind of initiation that Greek-letter fraternities go through. We'd make believe we might have, but it was never a hazing type of initiation.

But this professor's son, he wanted to get to know the kids. He wanted to go into the diplomatic corps. He looked up the group and one of the other freshmen asked him to become a member, so we gave them [the initiates] a long initiation period of questions and answers, to see what their attitudes were, more than anything else. It was past midnight. There came a phone call and someone said, "It's for you, Prex."

"This is Professor So-and-So and if you are keeping my son there, I don't want him to join anywhere some damn old foreigner is giving them the works." And boy, did he read the riot act to me! For a professor, to say those things, they were supposed to be knowledgeable!

So then I told him, "Look, you can say what you want. If you don't want your son to join, that's up to you. But your son asked to become a member of his own free will and I think he would make a good member. But if you don't want him to, you talk it over with him when he gets home. If he still doesn't want to, we'll abide by it. But as far as any hazing, like you think that you've gone through in your fraternity, we're not a bunch of damn fools like you were." And that shut him up. He didn't say anything. About two years after, about graduation time, we had a farewell dinner and he apologized.

Riess: It sounds like it was an interesting group. Did the Cosmopolitan Club have many chapters?

Domoto: I think there were only about two chapters in the States then that had living groups. The rest of them were just social groups. Actually, unless you live with the group you don't get to know it; it's just a social group that would get together, like your YMCA, or any of the groups where you just meet once a month, and you get to know a person superficially. It is only when you live with them and fight with them and talk with them or you have to work with them together that then you get to know a person. But at that time, Cornell and Illinois were the only two that really had full accommodations where you lived in the house together. Chicago had what they called International House, which is a part of the same group, but they more or less kind of limited their membership to the Christian faith. It didn't have to be, but it was, more or less. So I don't think that they got the full cross section of what a cosmopolitan group should be.

Tom Domoto, Propagating and Hybridizing Chrysanthemums

Riess: That is very interesting.

Your father was doing some hybridizing, or was that more your interest?

Domoto: My father's early propagation and hybridizing work was with chrysanthemums. His early catalogue shows some of the early varieties and some of the awards that were received and some catalogue letters that show, and the correspondence I have found, were on the varieties that he had introduced. Carnations he worked with some, but mostly chrysanthemums.

Riess: Was he self-taught? He and his brother hadn't had training in this?

Domoto: No, he was the only one that really went into it. The other brother that came with him from Japan at the same time went into the mercantile brokerage business.

Riess: I thought that when it said Domoto Brothers--

Domoto: Yes, the "brothers" was a younger brother; there were several younger brothers that came after he got going. I think one of them was with us for quite awhile. The other ones were [with us] just a short while and [stayed] maybe five or ten years and then left for health reasons or just went back to Japan. But one of them stayed until we lost the property. But most of his education [in] growing was all from self education.

Riess: When he had the booming business in 1910, what was called the New Ranch and the twenty-five greenhouses, how many employees were there?

Domoto: They must have had [pause] nineteen or twenty people there, I guess. They used to have bunkhouses for them, I know that. The bunkhouses, I remember, I think there were at least twenty-one or twenty-two rooms in the bunkhouse for the men.

Riess: These were single men who had just come over from Japan?

Domoto: Yes, and then there were a couple of other rooms for--the married couples were mostly--the wife was probably helping to keep house and the man worked in the nursery; not all of them, but in some instances I think that was the way it worked. Otherwise, in some cases the man would be the cook for the bunch and the wife would either help the cook or they would be nursemaid. Those things kept changing.

Domoto: Incidentally, Filoli had a big bunkhouse, too.

Riess: Where the Italian gardeners lived?

Domoto: Yes. I don't know whether it is still there or not, but it was quite an impressive building there, with a recreation kind of room and everything. It was not the kind of ranch house--bunkhouse--that you connect with the average farm commercial area. It was really nicely put together.

Riess: Filoli is so isolated. I guess they really had to provide everything.

Domoto: Yes, I guess the nearest--if they wanted to get down--they had to go from there down that old road down into San Mateo or to the railroad to get into San Francisco.

Riess: We really have to concentrate more on Filoli, much as I have a whole lot more little questions for you. Domoto Brothers, Inc., closed at the time of the Depression and that was about when your father was retiring anyway, or did that just knock him out completely?

Domoto: No, that's probably what knocked him out more than anything else. He was at the age when his health was bad. But I think that's probably what did it.

III FILOLI, POST WORLD WAR II

Bulbs

- Domoto: The other name that comes into my mind now at Filoli [is] Peter Valinga. He was a Hollander that came over right after the war, he and his wife.
- Riess: After the First World War?
- Domoto: Second. They sold Dutch bulbs and he put in quite a nice display. He used to put in a display at the Oakland garden show, the spring garden show, and I remember because he used to put on the regular Dutch costume with the clogs, their wooden shoes. Before that, I think they used to buy their bulbs through one of the other bulb dealers--I don't know where he used to buy them--but because of the garden exhibit they put in, he was able to break in there and sell her an order of bulbs. He also made it a point that he would like to set those bulbs out for her. I know that the first year they came up, they were planted very carefully and of course came up--and after that, why, he was in, because the arrangement and the varieties and everything, he really made the show.
- Riess: That would have been just his specialty though?
- Domoto: Just bulbs and then other things that they wanted. Along with that, I think that this is about the period when Mrs. Roth started to spend a little more time at Filoli instead of traveling or else in the spring, when she would be there when the gardens were in bloom, because they were traveling around all of the time because of her interest in horses and the harness racing. Quite often that season kind of tied in with the spring season, and the result was that I know that the gardener said, "Mrs. Roth doesn't see the prettiest time of the garden because she is out or she comes in at night," and at night time, unless they have the lights on, she didn't see it.

Toichi, Troubleshooter

Domoto: When she started to enjoy the garden more, that is when I started to get called out more and more to come down to see what--and as far as the design, I am not a designer, but when they were having trouble about where they should plant it where it would grow, I could tell them the location. So that was my feeling, and that is the way I have always told any of my customers, "I don't know if they are going to look good there. That is not my business. But if the soil or something is there, I can tell you about the environment in relation to buildings or sunshine. I can tell you whether it will grow there or not. But whether that is going to be right plant for there or not, I don't know. You have to get somebody else to do that."

Riess: With the soil, do you just go by feel or were you doing tests?

Domoto: No, I could do some tests but most of it [was] from seeing what is growing. Most of the gardens are not new. They are old gardens and seeing what is growing there otherwise. If there is like azaleas or rhododendrons, they are making the beds anyway. So if they wanted to plant rhododendrons or azaleas there, why, we'd go ahead and do it. But some of the things were learned there. In the front garden, the court garden, over the years, that whole section, they used to have a lot of Hinodegiri azaleas in there. They started to go out and then gradually we replaced them once and they still kept [failing]. We couldn't figure it out. I think it was just before Mr. Thiringer. He may have already been there, but I think it was a man before him, as I recall. What is Thiringer's first name?

Riess: Leslie.

Domoto: No, it was someone else. [pause] But this man was there just a short time.

What we found was that the roots of those big maples in the courtyard were coming up into the beds. So they decided to put a false bed in there and make a bed and put the azaleas on top. They put four-by-fours I guess in and some planks on there and put the peat moss on top, and they closed the ends off so it wouldn't show the boards. [With] the humidity in there, the roots still went up through air space up to the top. So then later they had to leave an air space where the roots would be air pruned because it was coming through and the air would dry the roots before it had a chance to go up into the top.

Domoto: I don't know if they have still kept it, but that was the only way they could keep--the annuals, they didn't have too much trouble, because they would dig a hole and the flowers come up and they are gone. Most of the annual flowers were grown in the greenhouse and then as soon as they are ready to flower and Mrs. Roth was having a party or something, they would bring it down and set it around the base of the trees. Then when two or three days are over, they would take it back and the greenhouse would have to supply some more plants to keep that cover going.

But the permanent plants, when the roots are in competition, that's when they start to get into trouble. That's because the trees got bigger and bigger.

Riess: That's interesting. I can't remember whether they still have azaleas around there.

Domoto: They still have the azaleas, but whether they still kept that false bottom in there or not, I don't know. But that was the solution for it and then I think one of the magnolias they had in there finally died. We are not sure whether it was oak root fungus. It could be, because by that time oak root fungus started to grow in there and we weren't sure whether the azaleas were going from oak root fungus or they were in competition with the maple tree roots.

Riess: I never thought about oak root fungus, but of course the whole area could have been infected.

Domoto: Yes, it could be but without having an actual autopsy of the thing ahead of time, until after they were gone and destroyed, we have no way of telling what caused it.

Riess: Is your philosophy in general to replace or do you try to save?

Domoto: Yes, I think so, to just go ahead and replace. You are familiar with the area down there?

Riess: Yes.

Domoto: Do you know where the garage is? There is a little planting, a court circle there, a sort of a border. I don't know what is planted there now, but at one time I think they had *Raphiolepis* or something in there and the deer used to eat it up. So then they found that the *Sasanqua* camellias were not being chewed by the deer. So she planted that whole bed with *Shishi Gashira* and the edging, I think, is boxwood if I remember--either boxwood or myrtle, but I think it is boxwood. They got just above the boxwood

Domoto: and they started to make a nice cover for that mound there and then all of a sudden they started to get chewed on. They couldn't figure it out. It wasn't the old deer, it was the young deer that started to chew on it! [laughter]

Riess: They already had developed a little taste for it!

Domoto: Yes, I guess so. They didn't mind the bitterness or whatever it was of the foliage.

IV MISS ISABELLA WORN

Riess: What do you personally remember of Isabella Worn?

Domoto: Personality-wise, she was very decisive.

Riess: That is not very good in a woman maybe?

Domoto: No, she wasn't [bad]. Like my sister said, she would arrive and say, "Where's your father?" [sharply] "Go call him." And my sister says, "I never liked her, because she was too bossy."

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Riess: Do you think that was her behavior with everybody?

Domoto: Yes--and not inclined to be too talkative until later. She knew just exactly what she wanted and she made up her mind what she wanted and that was what she wanted. But I noticed in her later years when she came, she used to ask me, or ask Mrs. Domoto, "What do you think of this or that for color?" Alice used to say, "Gee, Miss Worn is getting older, she is asking," and before, that was the last thing she would do, ask what you thought about this or that. She would make the decision and that was final.

Riess: Was there a way of introducing her to new varieties? After all, she was coming to a place where new things were happening all of the time.

Domoto: She would ask, "What do you have new?" Or she would spot the new things. She had an eye for new things, or things that would fit into the different areas, or for different customers that she had in mind. Actually, landscape-wise was a little later thing for her. First, mainly she was an interior decorator.

Riess: Yes, that's what I've heard, making arrangements for parties.

Domoto: Making floral decorations. I remember going over to--I saw the effects afterwards and heard about it later--that we had supplied her with a lot of Van derCrayzen azaleas that had been forced for this big party that was going to be held in I think it was the Fairmont Hotel. There was this whole big mass on the wall and I couldn't figure out how they were all stuck up there. After, we found out she had just broke them and stuck them up in there because this was an over-night affair.

Someone said that at that time sort of a competitor of hers--not a real competitor, but trying to do the same kind of work--was a florist named Stein in San Francisco. I understand he happened to be watching her starting to do it and she saw him and they tell me that she said [firmly], "Get that man out of here and close that door! I'm not going to work anymore until you get him out of the room!" [laughter] That's what they told me the next day when I was looking at that. And that was her. She would do what she had in mind. She had a certain way she had to go and it would either be Miss Worn's way or no other way. But she had the good taste of doing it and when she got through, it looked good, so she could get by with it.

I think when you are dealing with society league people that are spoiled--not all, but a lot of them have had their way and they want their way or rather they think they know what they want--to be able to go in there and tell them, "No, that's not the way it should go, [it should go] this way," and to do it and get by with it, you have to have the personality that she did in order to be able to do it.

Riess: Yes, I think you are right.

Domoto: I think she was a good psychologist. But inside she was a very warm person.

Riess: How do you know?

Domoto: Being an old maid and putting her nieces and nephews through school and paying for their family and everything, without their knowing too much about it. I don't know to this day whether--sometimes, a couple of times, in talking, the others seem to kind of slight her, but knowing what she was doing, after her talking to my father about what she had done or was doing, I have a feeling that a lot of things she was doing for them was on the sly.

Riess: So she opened up to your father.

- Domoto: Oh yes, because my father was pretty much that way, kind of brusque sometimes. He would be very frank to some people, and maybe he was too frank, but what he did say, why most of the time was the truth. So that was it.
- Riess: She had a nephew who has a nursery in San Anselmo, Donald Perry?
- Domoto: Yes, he still has it, I think, or he may have sold it. But the nursery I think is still operating, the Sunnyside Nursery. He may have sold it and the name may still be kept there.
- Riess: I was wondering how many nurseries did she use? Did she use you all exclusively?
- Domoto: Oh no, no, she went all over, wherever she could get potted plants, she would go to Geneva, Evergreen, James. Cut flowers she would get, like roses if she needed a bunch of roses for a home, a lot of cut roses, Avansino's for cut flowers. She knew who to depend on for the best in the line of materials she needed.
- Riess: How about some of the eastern mail order places? Did western gardeners use Burpee, Wayside?
- Domoto: I think some of them did. I think Wayside, to what extent they did out here I don't know.
- Riess: Would there be things that would be exclusive to those like Burpee or Wayside?
- Domoto: Wayside, most of their things until recently were material that was more or less geared for the middle western [and] eastern states. The Pacific Coast area, we were always the outcast. In other words, west of the Milwaukee and mountain states we had another price and unless it was really something good, we were kind of balking at that extra tax they stuck on.
- Riess: So it wasn't that the materials were not adaptable to western--
- Domoto: No, but you see most a lot of the things that they had were deciduous things. Once an easterner comes out to California and stays out here for awhile, outside of maybe lilacs and peonies, they want flowers all the year around. They want a shrub. [They will say], "Gee, only one time of flower? No flowers all year around?" They get spoiled, just like with the weather. They forget that there is four seasons. But they do miss their four seasons once in awhile.

Riess: Yes, I have read a lot about your development of tree peonies and yet still I don't see peonies that much in California.

Domoto: Well, you won't find them any other place either because their propagation is so difficult. [pause; looking in phone book] Yes, there is a Sunnyside Nursery in San Anselmo. It is still there. It doesn't say who the owner is any more, but it is still there.

Riess: That is interesting to know. Did you deal also with Miss Worn when you were in your own business or was she retired by then?

Domoto: No, she was still buying materials not only for Filoli but for the other people down the peninsula and San Francisco.

Riess: In fact, she worked for San Simeon, did you say? It was the connection with Julia Morgan?

Domoto: Yes, she came out, as I remember, to my dad's place, with Julia Morgan. But Miss Worn went around the San Leandro area at that time picking up a lot of the trees in the yards that were available. We were buying plants, too, at that time. We used to go out and, with like magnolias and camellias, we used to go out with a crew and dig them up and bring them in and establish them for sale.

But quite often we would go in there to buy something and then they would say, "It's already sold." I would say, "Who bought it?" "I don't know, some lady came and bought it." Almost invariably of course she would pay more than we would because of going direct and that was the time when San Simeon was being developed. Some was freighted down, but some of the bigger plants were barged down, especially after the fair. A lot of the things had to be barged down. The roads weren't that good and the trucks now, of course, they have these big semis but in those days they were so small that you couldn't transport more than one or two trees. But you could put them on a big barge in San Francisco or in Oakland and the barge could go on down and land right down there because Hearst built a dockside down there for all of these European things to come in. So a lot of the camellias that are down there came from the San Leandro-Sacramento area.

Riess: So she was the designer also, you are saying, for most of the big estates on the peninsula side?

Domoto: I don't think so much designing. I think most of that design part was already in. I think she was more actually helping to fill in. Like Filoli, the main part was already in. There wasn't too much to change. But, for instance, she would want some plants for in the corridor or the room or for this jar or that jar in there or

Domoto: if they were going to have a party in the ballroom she would want some plants for the decoration for the party that was going to be held in the ballroom, that type of material, that was what we were called on mostly to supply.

Then, as far as the camellia varieties that went down there, Mrs. Roth used to come on her own in the camellia season.

Riess: And see them in bloom here?

Domoto: See them in bloom or ask which was in and ask me to send them over and then select them.

Riess: How was it to work with Mrs. Roth?

Domoto: Oh, very easy.

Riess: She would defer to you or would she have a point of view that was very--

Domoto: Oh no, there were certain things that she, as long as it would fit into her garden, why, that was it. But I think, unless it didn't fit in and didn't grow, if it wouldn't grow there, she would say, "Would it fit some other place?" That was the way she would ask.

Riess: Because she would be attracted to the plant itself? She was drawn to it?

Domoto: Yes.

V APPRECIATING THE CHARACTER OF GARDENS

Riess: It occurred to me to wonder whether you would send any of your customers then to see something in a site or location at Filoli. People might say to you, "How does this really look? How does it grow?"

Domoto: No, I don't do that. Neither Filoli nor some of the other places. No, I feel that the garden is their own place. If it's like a park, it's different. But a private home, unless they have a very rare tree that they are very, very proud of and I know that they are showing it to people, I will say, "There is a garden in Piedmont where it is growing" or "There is a garden in Berkeley I know where it grows well." But as far as telling them that they should go see it, I don't, I never did. Quite often--and I always felt the same way--a person puts a garden in and you don't like to have every Tom, Dick and Harry. The thing is, that the people that you would like to have come in are the ones that respect that. The ones that you would just as soon not come in are the most brazen that come in.

Riess: Yes, I'm sure!

Domoto: So I feel they are not going to miss anything. The other thing, the ones who are the most brazen are the ones who don't always absorb what they should see.

Riess: Perhaps so; that sounds very Japanese.

Domoto: Their ego is, "I went to see so-and-so's place." "What did you see there?" "I don't know," or what they tell you they saw is kind of superficial.

Riess: That is interesting, because when you think of the way tours of gardens are run, it is often a tour of the names of things. This, I think, is very western, this kind of checking off the names of things, rather than experiencing it.

Domoto: Is it? I don't think so. I think it all depends on the person. I don't think it's a matter of race or color. You go into a certain garden and the way it is put together, they say, "Gee, this garden has a certain feeling." If it is really an intimate garden, it reflects the feeling of the person that has done it or his character. But if it is done by an architect, it doesn't reflect the owner's character sometimes.

Now it is changing quite a bit, but for awhile I could go up to any of the peninsula gardens--of all the gardens we have supplied materials to, I have never visited but very few of them. But I could go into the garden and say, "This is Tommy Church's garden, this is so-and-so's garden, or this is so-and-so's design." There would be certain ways the plants were put in, the type of materials put in there, that would almost be the same as putting a signature at the bottom of a painting.

Riess: I guess what I was thinking about is the question, when you go through a garden, whether it is even necessary to name what things are.

Domoto: The only time it would be necessary is if someone is interested in recording it for planting themselves or finding out what it would do and also, the picture as a whole you appreciate as an ensemble, not as each piece of a costume.

Riess: Yes, I think so and yet Filoli seems to be like a real sort of garden club because there are so many things to learn.

Domoto: Yes, and it has been changed. For instance, the natural garden, over the years they have tried to keep things in there that would be growing naturally, that garden up in back of their tennis courts. Then the rose garden, of course, was the formal garden. They used to have--I don't know if they are still there--a row of espalliered fruit trees going back.

Riess: Yes, I think that has kind of fallen by the wayside.

Domoto: Yes, that takes a lot of knowledge and a lot of work to keep it pruned up.

Riess: I think their intention is to start that again actually.

Domoto: But where are you going to get the men to do it? By men I mean the skill to do it.

VI TEACHING THE SKILLS; FLORICULTURE SCHOOLS

Riess: You must know Mai Abergast.

Domoto: Yes.

Riess: Mai Abergast has hopes that it will be a school.

Domoto: Yes, but then who is going to teach this school? You could put up a school and get the dollars for it, but who is going to teach it? Where are the teachers?

Riess: I don't know. Where are the teachers? Do people use you as a teacher?

Domoto: No, I refuse to teach.

Riess: And the School of Floriculture at the University of Illinois?

Domoto: Well, that's the old group. See, the schools like that go in cycles. It is only as good as the man in charge that knows something and then it passes the prime and unless they have some of the younger people coming in that have the same dedication, it passes on. At one time in the line of floriculture it was Cornell, then it was Illinois, and then it became Ohio State, then it became Michigan. I don't follow it that closely, but it so happened that at Ohio State was one of the students of Professor Dohner from Illinois. Then Michigan became quite prominent in floricultural work because of a classmate of mine in Illinois [who was there]. The same as Davis now. For a long time we used to kind of turn up our noses at Davis. But now it has come right up because they have people up there that are [not only] experimental minded, but more on the side that will apply to either the nursery or forestry or to the garden group. They have to be able to sell themselves, not only the knowledge that they know. Unless they can sell themselves, the knowledge doesn't go over.

Riess: Do you mean more so than in the other trades because they deal with the public so much?

Domoto: Yes, I think so. I think in anything, besides just the knowledge, unless you can impart that knowledge to someone else, unless it is something that can be written down and you can absorb it like a math problem or a chemistry equation. But in other things you have to be able to impart that enthusiasm for that subject.

Riess: Yes, right, but on the other hand, some people might argue that everybody now has a little of this knowledge through Sunset Magazine and through horticultural journals.

Domoto: But that is the sad part of it. They have just a--you know, when you are cooking, you have a smattering but the last bit that goes in that gives that little difference in the taste that [makes you] say, "Gee, this is good," or "Why doesn't this one taste just as good?" That is what's missing.

I think there is a possibility, as they go along with Filoli-- I have high hopes for Filoli, I like the place, the environment is good--and it is only a matter of time that I look forward to seeing it as a western arboretum, because it is big enough, and the climate is a lot better than Golden Gate Park. Golden Gate Park is fine for rhododendrons, just that type of material. But for general nursery stock, nursery ornamentals, not so good.

They [Filoli] could develop, for instance, a collection of almost any kind of shrubs. You were talking about peonies. Now, peonies down there where they planted them have done well. Look how well the maples have done in their court over the years, [how] the magnolias have done. Granted some of the soil has been made over, but after that original made-over soil is used up, and the roots go out, and you see how some of the other things are growing, that means that the surroundings and the basic structure is good.

VII ITALIAN GARDENERS

Riess: Did the Italian gardeners really develop as garden experts, do you think, or were they more just laborers?

Domoto: There is a cycle there. I may be wrong, but originally, if you check--I think he is still alive--Clarence Hoff in Oakland near Mills College, you might check with him on the original membership of the Pacific Coast Horticultural Society. That used to be all white--all white and mostly Scotch and Irish, very few Italians in there, almost none. Of course, there are some florist groups like Podesta-Baldocchi. But the rest of them are outsiders. But the other group, the horticultural society itself, if you look at the names there, [they are] Irish, some German, but there are few other names in there. You might ask him. He is retired now. He used to be at Hallowell's for a long time, but he is retired now. I think he has his buttons still and you could just ask him.

Riess: Actually, that reminds me when I was doing a Thomas Church oral history, that I interviewed a nursery man who was near Colma who was an Italian.*

Domoto: Tommy Church used to buy a lot of plants from Pacific Nursery at Colma. Lou Schenone was in that, but then Lou was about the fourth generation there. Before Lou his boss was Kempf. But you see the son [Paul] served in the army in the group there and he wasn't interested too much in the nursery and Lou was his foreman, so he took over the operation and did a good job of it. But the original Kempf was a German with a German accent and he was the one who had the Pacific Nursery and they used to grow a lot of shrubs and bedding plants. Before that, there used to be, I think we had an old catalogue--I think I sent that over to the Strybing--was Ludemann.

Riess: So this doesn't prove anything about Italians.

*Thomas D. Church, Landscape Architect, Two volumes, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

Domoto: No, and as far as the flower market is concerned, at first there was no market at all. Probably flowers were being sold here and there. My father started in selling some and then people started to bring them in. The carnation growers from this side of the bay, and down the peninsula--the peninsula was mostly chrysanthemum growers. The original Japanese growers were mostly in chrysanthemums, and some carnations, but mostly chrysanthemums. On this side, a lot of them were in carnations and roses. They used to have these bamboo baskets that were about four feet long and two by two. They would pack the flowers in there and put them on their back and take the steam trains to the Mole, and take the ferry over to San Francisco, and then sell them over there.

Then at that time, the first place that I remember was Lick Place where they had the store and that was where Miss Worn used to have her business on the second floor above the store for quite a while. The original flower market was in the basement.

Then from there they moved over to Bush Street, on the corner of Bush and St. Anne where the telephone exchange is. That used to be the big market. Then from there they moved down to Fifth Street, and from Fifth they moved up to Brannen. But at the time between I would say Lick Place and even up to the early days of St. Anne's, mostly the Italian growers came in with the maidenhair fern. They were raising maidenhair and violets. Most of their violets were for shipping out. In those days McLellan, Domoto, Enomotos, used to do a big shipping of violets and chrysanthemums.

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Domoto: The Italians, I think, were mostly growing vegetables first. Then my feeling is that most of them being devout Catholics, they have to have flowers to take to the cemetery.

Riess: Yes, and to the altar.

Domoto: --Or to the altar. If they can't go and buy them and the woman is quite good, she will plant a few seeds to grow some flowers for decoration day or whatever day to have some. Pretty soon they find, when they go to market with the vegetables to the vegetable market, they take some into the market. They found out that bunch of calendulas around there or whatever they brought in was bringing in more than the bunch of radishes that they were bringing in. So gradually the flowers took over, and the same with your original maidenhair growers that used to grow maidenhair and asparagus and also, in those days, the smilax in long garlands for decoration. It was used in festooning the dinner tables. Those were mostly grown in those long houses by the Italian gardeners.

Domoto: Then from there they started getting into pot plants. But up till that time most of the pot plants were being raised by the Japanese growers and some of the German growers. Then the Italian growers got in. Geneva was one of the biggest ones that got in, the Podesta Brothers and some of those came in. But I think all of it ties in with the availability of cheap labor. When my father was operating, we had a number of trainees, so-called, where they had agricultural training in Japan, coming over here either wanting to study or there were some that came over with the idea of evading the conscription--compulsory military training.

Of course, that stopped and then pretty soon the immigration laws stopped them from coming in--quotas. Then for a while there the Italian group--there was no restriction on those. They came in quite heavily. So they were being used quite heavily like in Geneva's there. Along in '28, '29, and the thirties I used to go over to the market there to go down to Geneva's to buy some potted plants to sell. If I went over there at lunch time and they were having lunch, it was fun to sit down at the table with them. They would have this long dinner table and the spaghetti and macaroni was being served in these great big tin wash trays or casters. They would take it [demonstrates rolling it] right on down the line. Then right next to it were these big casks of wine. They could go up there and get all they wanted.

Then the unions came in and then they had to change that because they couldn't have no more free time to go and drink their vino whenever they wanted to. They had to have a rest period and all of this, different things that they wanted. So then they cut out going to the wine bar whenever they wanted. They cut the time down. They used to work from dawn to dusk. They would go up there in order to drink the wine or eat there or whatever they wanted to do.

They used to make it kind of tough for me because when I would go out to buy something at the place, they always insisted that I have a cup of vino and since I don't drink, at first--after they got to know me, but before that they thought I was refusing their hospitality. But those are the changes that you see.

VIII PRUNING AT FILOLI

- Riess: I wondered how many people were brought in from the outside or whether they tried, when Filoli was rolling, to have a completely self-sufficient crew.
- Domoto: My first trip down there, I think at that time they said, "We don't use the bunkhouse as much as we used to." But even then I think they had about nine or eleven gardeners.
- Riess: Yes, that is what I've heard.
- Domoto: Yes, because to keep up the formal beds with the annuals and planting the annuals--and they used to grow all of those annuals themselves--that took a lot of help. When the costs started to go up, then they found out that they could go out and buy the plants a lot cheaper than they could grow them themselves and get better plants that were more uniform.
- Riess: How about pruners?
- Domoto: The heavy pruning of the trees, I think, was done by this Davey tree man that would come in about once or twice here or whenever it was necessary, especially [for] the low hanging branches that were dangerous, they would have them come in. The garden pruning, some of it was I would say--there was one period there when it was neglected pretty bad. When Mr. Thiringer finally took over, I went down and some of the camellias were way out into the walks and everything. He said, "Do you think it would be all right to prune these back to give more room to the walk?" I said, "Yes, it won't hurt any." So he said, "I'm going to prune them when Mrs. Roth isn't around." I said, "Just forget about that, but do it when the season is right and when I see Mrs. Roth I will tell her that they should be pruned back," and I was pretty sure that she would agree with me.

Domoto: I think one thing that really kind of impressed Mrs. Roth was they had one big weeping cherry tree in the yard. I think it's gone now. The borers finally got hold of it. But at the head of the formal gardens there was a big weeping cherry. At the top borers or something--it got sunburned and borers had gotten it. They were about ready to take it out. The tree man had said, "Take it out."

Thiringer asked me. Well, I said, "Maybe if you clean it out and shade it a little bit, you might be able to save it. But it's going to look bad for awhile," because whereas it used to cover maybe about twelve or fourteen feet, it was down to about three feet. He said he would try. Fortunately, I guess, in that following season it started to come up, because in the meantime, if we had found another replacement, I know that that would have gone out and we would have put the tree in. But the biggest replacement they could find, the head was no bigger than the tree they were putting in. So we did send one down there, but to be kept as a reserve to put in there later. When that one started to come out with having a root system there, it really took over again.

I think she had quite a bit of confidence in him then because not having a full gardener's training--but he was very thorough--I think he was an attorney or a judge before he came over.

Riess: I didn't realize that he had that background, but I knew that he was sent to horticultural school here, wasn't he?

Domoto: No, he used to go to horticultural classes at night. I forgot who the teacher was, but he [Thiringer] asked me questions. [He'd say], "You know, that guy don't know nothing." He said, "I can pick up that stuff from the books. But he don't tell me the nitty gritty. The thing I want to find out, I ask him and he kind of puts me off."

So I would say, "I can't tell you, but I'll try to find out for you," and I would give him the information. But he was very thorough. Everything he would write down in his own notes. Like the camellias [were] in there, the different ones--he made a list of their names and where they were located and then if some of the labels were gone, he would start to relabel them so that he could remember what they were.

When the big wisteria that goes around the top of the building was getting all viney and rough, and then I think it was the eugenia on the side, it got too big--and now I think they took that out, because it could be taken out, and put something else in--anyway,

Domoto: the wisteria was getting so viney and that was when I was able to get Mr. Okasaki, the man I had doing my bonsai work, to go down there and do the pruning on the [wisteria]. I would say that he probably might have been the first Japanese gardener to work on the place as far as I know. There may have been others but most of the others were Italian because the head gardener was Italian and I doubt very much if there were any Japanese on there before that.

Riess: So when Mr. Okasaki was there, did he then just come in by day?

Domoto: He just went in there for that time for the wisteria. Because he did a good job on the wisteria, there was a big *chamaecyparis obtusa* [Hinoki cypress] in the front that had come over on both sides and had really outgrown itself there. Mr. Thiringer wanted to have him prune that out and it was on the edge of the stairway. It closed off about half or better than half, I guess, of the small walkway. When they cut that back, of course you had almost a full sweep of the steps. Underneath all of the branches that came across--I forget what it was. It was either an old Italian vase or a figure that was supposed to match one of the others that they thought was lost and here it had been underneath all of the branches there. Then when that came out, of course, it really looked good. So I think since then, they have had him back to do some of that topiary type of pruning and then some of the pruning of the trees, the bonsai trees [that were] around, that type of pruning. I think he had gone back for that.

But the big trees and the roadway tree pruning, I think that is still Davey or some other tree group comes in for that.

I think for a while there Stocking Roses in San Jose was supplying them with roses.

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Blake Estate Oral History Project

Toichi Domoto

MRS. BLAKE AND MISS SYMMES, HORTICULTURISTS

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1987

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Toichi Domoto's nursery in Hayward is an oasis in that sprawling southern Alameda County city. Located between the railroad tracks and Whitman Boulevard, it exists in a tranquility of birds, bonsai, and bamboo. Towering trees and stout-trunked stock form jungle-like allees. There is sufficient flora that the place may well create a weather system of its own.

Daily Mr. Domoto tends his acre or so of bonsai of all the standard descriptions and then all the variations thereon. His house is tucked behind fruit trees in the center of the oasis. His office in a small structure off the parking area is dated by its cash register and its files, but Mr. Domoto's memory more than makes up for his lack of computer-era "access."

In 1981 I had interviewed Toichi Domoto for the Lurline Matson Roth oral history. At that time he discussed the plant material at Filoli, Mrs. Roth's estate in Woodside, California. He also talked about his father Tom Domoto's nursery business in East Oakland and the stock, such as persimmon, he introduced to California. Toichi Domoto studied at Stanford University, transferred and graduated in horticulture from the University of Illinois, in 1926, and spent the World War II relocation years in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

For the Blake House History Project I wanted to talk to Mr. Domoto about the California Horticultural Society, "Cal Hort" as he calls it, of which he had been a member since the late thirties, and president in 1957—in particular about the Blake Garden specimens that Anita Blake brought or sent to meetings of the Society. But the bonus in this interview was Mr. Domoto's childhood memory of Mrs. Blake and Miss Mabel Symmes coming to his father's nursery and buying stock, between 1925 and 1930. The insider view of the horticultural trade is fascinating.

Mr. Domoto's choice made long ago not to visit gardens he serves was a disappointment: I expected he would be able to offer informed recollections of the Blake Garden at various times in the forties and fifties. But that choice came from some wisdom of Mr. Domoto's that I think must have to do with the amount of ego that gets tied up in gardens. While it frustrated many a proud garden lover, perhaps that pride was what dissuaded him. Serenity is what I found at Domoto's Nursery, and an absence of ego, desirable qualities in gardens, good reasons to make gardens.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

October 29, 1987
Regional Oral History Office
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Toichi Domoto
Date of birth Dec. 11, 1902 Birthplace Oakland Cal
Father's full name Thomas Kanetaro Domoto
Occupation Nurseryman Birthplace Japan
Mother's full name Teru Morita Domoto
Occupation Housewife Birthplace Japan
Your spouse Alice Ayako Domoto
Your children Douglass, & Marilyn.

Where did you grow up? Oakland, Calif.
Present community Hayward "
Education Oakland Public Schools, 2 yr
Stanford, Graduate in Horticulture, Univ. of Cal.
Occupation(s) Nurseryman.

Areas of expertise _____

Other interests or activities _____

Organizations in which you are active Retired.

Mabel Symmes and Anita Blake at the California Horticultural
Society Meetings

[Date of Interview: June 8, 1987]

Riess: When did you join Cal Hort?

Domoto: I don't remember exactly. I didn't join in the beginning because I wasn't too much interested in going all the way to San Francisco for it. I was more interested in the nursery side of the business, rather than the non-commercial side, which the Cal Hort was in the beginning, until my arm was finally twisted by different people that were members of society.

Riess: It began in 1935, and then--I've forgotten where you were during the war.

Domoto: I was allowed to leave the relocation center for Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Riess: You were active before the war?

Domoto: Yes, I was active in Cal Hort before that. I used to go to meetings and bring material in. But it wasn't until after the war some time that I really got active in it.

Riess: Do you remember seeing Anita Blake and Mabel Symmes before the war?

Domoto: Oh, yes. They used to come to my father's nursery in Oakland. That I remember as a youngster, that they used to come in--probably that would be between 1925-1930 they used to come in.

I never waited on them, because I was a youngster then. But my father used to wait on them. I remember them talking, and sometimes they'd talk about a certain plant. Then Mrs. Blake would say, "Tom,"--that was my father's name, Thomas, but they all called him Tom--"I think that this should be named so-and-so," or, "Do you

Domoto: know that?" My father would say, "No, I know this is the way I bought it, so-and-so." I'd heard them talking about it. That was mostly with Mrs. Blake.

Miss Symmes was very quiet, and I knew her later when she used to come by. Those times when she was buying something for the garden, Mrs. Blake would pick out or look at the plant, and then she'd ask her sister, "What do you think about this?" Her sister would say, "I think it would be all right." She was buying plants for her client, and there seemed to be a sort of a very quiet sort of a dividing line there. One would make the comment, and the other wouldn't, you see.

I remember at the Cal Hort meetings it was the same way. I don't think Mrs. Blake ever went up to the podium to discuss the plant material. The plants were exhibited up on the stage, and whoever was chairman then would say, "Now this material was brought over from the Blake Gardens," and then the person would go up there and talk about the material. They'd go on and describe it, and how it grew. That was the way the program was conducted.

Riess: You mean, Mrs. Blake wouldn't get up and describe it herself?

Domoto: I don't remember her getting up. Miss Symmes, I think, did a couple of times. I remember the Blake Garden material more later, after [Walter] Vodden came. He used to bring the materials over, and he used to describe them.

Riess: Why do you think Mrs. Blake didn't get up?

Domoto: Well, she was very unassuming. As I remember, some of the East Coast society type customers who'd come out--some of them were very demanding, and some were very quiet and unassuming. I think the difference was there. She never tried to show off her knowledge.

Riess: But your father thought that she was very knowledgeable.

Domoto: Oh, yes, she was, because when they started to discuss certain plants they could converse on the botanical names and more on the culture of the garden material.

Riess: Would you think that she was, in fact, head and shoulders above other society people about plants?

Domoto: I think so. Well, she never tried to show it off.

Riess: For instance, some of the other "society customers"—are you thinking of someone like Mrs. [Lurline Matson] Roth?

Domoto: Well, Mrs. Roth really didn't get into her garden itself until after she gave up her racing. You see, she used to exhibit those horses. I think not so much riding, I think she was--

Riess: Harness racing.

Domoto: Harness racing. She was active in that. After she gave that up, then her efforts became more active into the garden. The early part of it, I think, she was more interested just in having somebody come over, order the plants for her, and put them in the garden. At that point, when she retired to the garden and gave up the society side of life, that's when she became interested.

Riess: It's interesting to me who might have been comparable to Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes. What other fine, old gardening ladies do you think of?

Domoto: Well, going back, of course, the person that was quite active in the introduction of plant materials was Professor [H.M.] Butterfield.

Riess: Butterfield. I saw his name in early Cal Hort journals.

Domoto: I called him professor, but I don't think he was full professor. But he was of the Extension Division, and very active in the Alameda County Horticultural Society.

Riess: But any amateurs that you think of?

Domoto: Oh, in the amateur line, in the early part of the Cal Hort Society, was Mrs. Scannavino--she was very active in the Alameda County Horticultural Society way back. I think her husband was a dentist, and they had a home down near Saratoga. They had quite a collection of irises and lilacs and different plants. She was very knowledgeable plantwise.

Riess: How would you characterize the garden at Blake Garden?

Domoto: Well, you know, I have often been invited by these people to come: "Will you come to look at my garden?" I thought that if you go, you get to the point where you felt there was a certain amount of rivalry between these people, these customers. If you went to one, you had to go to the other if you want to keep them as customers, you know.

So I said, "Well, I know how to grow the plants, and I can tell you if you give me a location whether they grow there, or not. But as far as design," I said, "I don't know anything about it." I maintained that so that I never went. My father also would not visit customers' gardens.

Domoto: The only visit I had to Blake Gardens—she had some Clematis armandi variety growing in the garden. Evidently she grew some from seed, and had one that was an improvement over it. She exhibited it at the Hort Society, since the clematis was in vogue. I wanted to get some cuttings to propagate it, but the exhibited material was not the type that would be suitable for propagating. She said, "Well, if you'd come up to the garden you can take what you want." That was the only time I went. And even then I didn't take the whole tour of the garden. I just ignored it. The vine was climbing on a tree trunk.

As I remember it, the garden was kept up, but--this was just my impression, I may be wrong--but my impression was that it was a garden you liked to be in, but not to show off in. That was the feeling I had, and that would be her personality, that she was knowledgeable and would do her duty in whatever she does. She wasn't bragging to the community that she was doing this or doing that. She had different things planted in different areas wherever they would do well. I think that's the impression I have of the garden.

The Search for Uncommon Plant Material

Riess: When she was asking you, and when she was asking your father to come and visit, wasn't she asking because she thought you would love to see her plants, not the design, but just the plants?

Domoto: Yes. I don't know if she was importing, or friends would send her things from someplace like England or other areas and she'd have it in the garden. My father always was importing a lot of different things. So she would say, "I just got such-and-such from Japan," or wherever, and, "How is yours doing? Did you get this and that?" If my father had something that she hadn't gotten and got ready to sell, if it was interesting she'd always buy a plant. But how or where she planted, I never knew. I wasn't interested that much then.

Riess: If your father got something in that was new and exotic, would he automatically tell her?

Domoto: He never used to phone or anything. They'd come out, and they'd start talking. See, generally new plants from abroad used to come in in late winter or early spring, because that was about the only time you could bring them in safely.

Riess: Bare root, is this?

Domoto: Bare rooting wasn't done until much later, after plant quarantine #37 went into effect. Then they had to bare root. Before that, why, you would bring the plants in with soil on the roots.

Riess: So people like Mrs. Blake would know that in winter they should check out Domoto's to see what's new.

Domoto: Even now most of the new material that the nurseries import would come in in the fall. They try to stock them in the fall and have it ready for the spring sale. It was a very seasonal business. Now, of course, the merchandising nurseries try to make it as even as possible, without a lot of big ups and downs.

Riess: She had people she corresponded with, and she would get seeds in the letters--

Domoto: I don't know that part of it, but I know that she used to get different plant material that other people hadn't gotten yet. Whether she traveled, or corresponded—a lot of the plant amateurs in those days were in correspondence with other people and other botanical gardens, or someone, not necessarily the gardeners, but the person that's in charge. They would exchange notes: "Do you have this?" or, "When I get back, I'll send you a seed or a cutting." That's about the way, I think, a lot of that was done.

Of course, some of the English nurseries used to send catalogues out to those people, just like Wayside Gardens does to the society type, where their prices are way above the normal garden prices.

Riess: The prices are way above what a normal nursery charges?

Domoto: If you look at the Wayside Garden catalogues, they are beautiful catalogues, but their prices are way above. They prided themselves in sort of being the best. They have good material, but I don't think it warrants the high prices they get for them.

Riess: Did you see, when you were in Cal Hort, a lot of competitiveness among the gardeners?

Domoto: No, I don't think they--there may have been, between some of the people trying to outdo the other on some things. But on the whole I don't think there was. I would say that most of the members that came to the Hort came to see and be educated.

Riess: And to share.

Domoto: Yes. And there was always a problem to keep enough of the active members bringing in material. Some of the membership, unless they were into a certain hobby which they were very familiar with, they hesitated bringing something in, unless they were encouraged to bring it in.

And on that score I think Mr. [Ernest] Wertheim was very good in trying to encourage people. He was active and he was forceful. I think he came from Germany, and being trained that way, he was very thorough. He was active in it, never a person that would make you feel you were being pushed at all, but he would see that things were organized. I call it the German thoroughness in getting detail worked out. He and Victor Reiter, who has passed away, they were very active.

Riess: So the horticultural society also would be more interested in plant material than they would be in looking at gardens?

Domoto: Yes, plant material. And, of course, if they went on a field trip they would go to someone's gardens, or something like that. But most of the interest was in plant materials. The meetings would be--if new material was being brought in we would discuss it, and have a speaker. Most of the time you'd have a speaker first. You would have, say, one hour or forty-five minutes to talk on certain things, like on--oh, anything exotic, or even commonplace, irises, or whatever. They would have a talk on it.

Mostly, they did more uncommon material, rather than common, because you had special societies. Like they had the Rose Society, African Violet Society, and Orchid Society. So those things were kind of held on the short side, because if they were interested in that, it would be possible for them to go to those special societies. So it was more the new and unusual plants that were being tried or brought in.

The speaker would know some botanist, horticulturist, or visitor from another area. They would arrange to have him on the program of the meetings. The last half would be discussing the plant material that was displayed up there on the stage.

The material that came in was put in the foyer rack, and the people would put their name displayed there on a little card. Then the committee would go through that, and while they were speaking, they would try to go through and pick out the material that would be of interest or different.

That material would be picked out by a committee of maybe I think about three or four people--and there was a chairman--and as they were picked out they would be brought up to the stage and exhibited so that the whole thing would not be discussed. Then the chairman would say, "In the plant material back there there's such and such a display of iris, or something, brought in by so and so, that you should look at."

The special material would be brought up to the stage, and each one would be discussed as it's brought up by whoever brought that in or someone speaking for them. Meeting places changed as the membership increased, but the format of the Hort Society and meetings remained stable.

Riess: When Walter Vodden came, it was because Mrs. Blake was so old that she didn't want to come, or what?

Domoto: I don't exactly know just when that thing changed, but Mr. Wertheim would know. He was very active, and still is active.

Riess: When Miss Symmes was there, did she talk?

Domoto: Sometimes. I know they used to come there, and bring the material in, but I don't remember either one of them going up too often.

The Nurseryman's Point of View

Riess: It's very nice that you knew them, or at least you saw them when they were young. You were very young.

Domoto: Yes. Most of the people that would come out to buy from my father, a good many would drive their own car. I remember in those days they would come with chauffeurs.

Riess: Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes came with a chauffeur?

Domoto: I think they had chauffeurs mostly. Not until later did people of society decide to drive their own cars. There used to be the feeling that in order to get around in the car, you had to have someone that knew how to drive it. It wasn't until much later that everybody would drive a car.

Riess: Did Mr. Blake come out with them?

Domoto: Hardly. A couple of times later to my nursery in Hayward. I remember him coming out with her to look at the tree peonies. I don't think that his interest was quite that much into the garden. He knew of the plants, but I don't think too much of it.

Riess: Did he come to Cal Hort meetings?

Domoto: No. I don't remember him coming to the Cal Hort.

Tom Domoto and the Piedmont Customers

Riess: Where was your father's business first?

Domoto: The nursery was first in Oakland. He started the nursery down at Third and Grove. That was just in the beginning. Then he moved out to East Oakland, that's on Fifty-Fifth Avenue. In those days it was known as Central Avenue. That's where he really got the nursery started.

Riess: Do you remember any of his comments about the Blakes?

Domoto: No. He hardly ever made any comments that way. The only thing I know that I remember is in the discussion of plant material, that they were talking on equal level. Some of the other people, they were asking about whether this plant grows better than that plant.

Riess: I wonder if your father supplied them with any of the plants that they had before they moved to Blake Estate. First they lived on Piedmont Avenue where the Memorial Stadium of the University later was built.

Domoto: He must have because, as I remember--I don't know when they moved up to Blake Gardens.

Riess: Nineteen twenty-three or twenty-four, I think.

Domoto: It would be before that when they were buying it. I always used to think of them as Piedmont customers. Like the Blakes and--

Riess: Well, the [Duncan] McDuffies maybe?

Domoto: Yes. The old McDuffie place, and the Crockers, and [Herman] Nicholises.

Riess: These were the Piedmont customers?

Domoto: Yes. And some of them even later, to my Hayward location. I remember the Nicholises, both the parents and the daughter used to come out. I don't remember the granddaughter, but the daughter, until several years ago.

Riess: Did your father, or do you, ever keep records by the customers so you could go back and pinpoint everything that they had bought over the years?

Domoto: I did at one time. Not my father's records because those belonged to the corporation in Oakland. But in Hayward I did until I needed storage space. My auditor said, "Well, you don't have to keep too many records." He gave me a list of material which I would have to keep. I looked up some of my old invoices for this meeting, and they only go back to about '69-'70.

Riess: It would be interesting.

Domoto: Certain ones from Piedmont would come in at azalea season to buy azaleas or camellias. General plant material went to those gardens when they were in the formative period; not so much the owners themselves but whoever was doing the landscaping would come out and buy the plants for them.

Floyd Mick, George Budgen, Thomas Church

Domoto: Very few of those people, I remember, did their own gardening, so somebody, the gardener or someone, came with them. If they liked the plant they would buy it and put it in. Most of the gardens were all designed. Floyd Mick in Berkeley, he did a lot of those gardens here.

Riess: In fact, Miss Symmes was a professional landscape architect. Was she doing other peoples' gardens?

Domoto: Oh, yes. She was doing that mostly. I don't think the home garden much, because there I think her sister more or less decided what she'd like, and then she had it planted. I think that was the way it was then, judging from the conversation that they used to get into when they were out looking around. Mrs. Blake would like a certain variety, and Miss Symmes would say, "Yes, I think we could use them." If Mrs. Blake liked it, all right, she'd find a place for it.

Riess: I see. Did you ever, though, see Miss Symmes come in with any of her other customers?

Domoto: I may have, but generally I don't remember so much.

Riess: Did the sisters look alike?

Domoto: I would say, as far as stature, they were built pretty much the same way. I guess their demeanor about the same too. Miss Symmes always kind of deferred to Mrs. Blake as though--I'm not sure, I think she was the older sister. Anita was the older sister. Miss Symmes was like a younger sister, you know. I always had that feeling.

Riess: The Blakes had had Walter Vodden in 1957. He came because of the University. But before that was there a gardener you associated with the gardens?

Domoto: I don't know who the gardener was then. They must have had a gardener there before.

Riess: Apparently there was an Indian fellow they had who used to work for them.

Domoto: Mr. Mick is available. He lives in, I guess, Oakland. It's Floyd Mick.

Riess: Yes. I think I talked to him once a long time ago. You think he would remember?

Domoto: He might. You see, he and George Budgen of the Berkeley Hort--they are about the same period. George started a nursery out there in Berkeley. I think Mr. Mick was getting started in the landscape design business. Tommy Church along about that period too. I know that as far as the gardens over in Piedmont and other areas in the Oakland hills, that Mr. Mick was instrumental in doing a lot of the gardens there.

Riess: Was he a designer on the scale of Tommy Church?

Domoto: I don't think he was--actually I've never gone to all the gardens that he had done.

As I have them classified, there are those that do the gardens to be doing a good garden, and others would like to do a garden to show off. The one garden is a garden that's designed to make it feel like it's not the designer's garden, but the person they're designing it for. In other words, you have a show garden, the personality is not displayed, but the architect's personality is displayed. The other is a home garden. I think Mr. Mick was the type that more or less designed a garden that would make the person feel like it was his own garden, whereas Tommy Church was designing the kind to show Tommy Church off.

Riess: That's what his customers wanted, probably. They wanted to say, "That's a Tommy Church garden."

Domoto: Well, it starts out that way, but later on, why, you're still not satisfied with it. It's just like you go and buy a Gump's piece of furniture, and you don't like it. But just because it's from Gump's--. [laughter]

Competitiveness in the Garden

Domoto: It's the same as when people used to come out and buy certain plants from my father. They'd say, "Did Mrs. So-and-So buy that? What [did] she buy?" My father would say, "Well, I don't know." He never used to say exactly what. Then they'd say, they would go on, "What about this plant? Is this good?" "Do you think it would look good in my garden?" "Well, it should grow there." And they would buy it.

Sometimes two or three people would come out together. One person would buy the plant. The next one would say, "Oh, I must have one too." [laughs] But in most cases before delivery they would say, "I've changed my mind about that plant. I don't think I want it." We'd laugh because the one that was already there had the funds. The other one was climbing and trying to be up there but she didn't have the funds to spend.

Riess: That's a very interesting observation.

Domoto: Anyone buying, most of the time if they were serious buyers they'd never bring anybody else, they'd come on their own. If they were coming as a group you'd always make a sale to someone, but it would never be on the basis of actually wanting. Sometimes they'd want to show off, and they'd buy. If they had the funds they would buy. Different personalities.

Mrs. Roth was never that way. She'd always come out and say, "I want something for my garden," and this and that. A lot of things were left up to me to pick out for her. Colorwise, why, she knew which colors and what shades she liked. Otherwise, plantwise--. Most of the time she used to come by herself, not even with a gardener.

Riess: Interesting.

When Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes came to you, were they looking for plants that were associated with the Orient?

Domoto: I don't think so. In my place I was more in camellias and azaleas than I was in some of the other plant material. Almost always in camellia season or azalea season they would come out and see if they could find a new variety to introduce to the garden. Incidentally, since I liked oddball plants, I'd find something. She'd say, "Well, what else do you have that's new?" or something like that. I'd say, "Well, this, and this." She'd say, "Oh, yes, I have that from a seed that I got from Australia," or something. "Mine is only about so high, and it never has flowered." We'd get into a discussion that way.

Riess: You had mentioned peonies. Did they have an interest in a cutting garden?

Domoto: I don't think so.

Riess: It was mostly perennial, shrubby--?

Domoto: As I remember, I think mostly shrubs, maybe perennials too. But since I wasn't into the perennials at all, why, I don't know. But I have the feeling that certain parts of the garden were perennials and flowers. The Piedmont [Avenue] garden, the way it was laid out I don't know.

Riess: So your specialty was flowering shrubs.

Domoto: Shrubs, yes.

Anita Blake and the Relocated Japanese Families

Riess: I came across correspondence in Mrs. Blake's letters that are in The Bancroft Library, with Japanese families who were relocated. I wondered if you knew about that.

Domoto: I heard that she was very good that way. But she was never one to say, "Well, I did this or that."

Riess: How did you hear it then?

Domoto: I think it was either one of my father's customers or something saying that, "I had a pretty tough time, and she helped me then." There were several people of that pre-relocation period that got talking to my dad. They wouldn't say who they were doing it for, but, "I have a family I'd like to get this for," or something like that.

Riess: Was it unusual then?

Domoto: I think so. And as far as I remember, some of the customers who came out would be dressed high fashion. As I remember her, she was always well-dressed, but never the flamboyant type. You know, some like to show off their clothes. She probably had—it was good material, but it wasn't one that said, "Here I have the—" you know. That type. I never got that feeling at all.

Riess: And so it was very natural for her to help the Japanese family?

Domoto: Or any other one that was in the group that would be in need.

Riess: By "in the group" you mean that she met these people through Cal Hort?

Domoto: I don't think so. I don't think Cal Hort.

Riess: How many Japanese gardeners were in Cal Hort?

Domoto: Very few. I remember only about one or two used to come in once in a while to the meeting. Most of them not, either because of the language difficulty or else they weren't--. I remember Pete Sugawara, he used to come in.

Riess: I don't know whether these families that she helped were working at the Blake Garden.

Domoto: I think most of the Japanese who came in as gardeners came usually as a couple. The wife would work in the house, and the husband would either work in the garden, or sometimes, if he was good, he'd be hired as a chauffeur. And then they would have a room there in the house to live in.

Riess: Yes. I haven't heard of that up there, though. I don't think the Blakes had that.

Domoto: I don't think by the time they went up to Berkeley. Maybe when they were in Piedmont [Avenue], they may have. As far as helping that way, they may have some other--. The people that were actually helping the Japanese during the evacuation, those that did very seldom talk about it because it wasn't the proper thing to do. It would be very much on the quiet side, and you were surprised where you got help from--the people that you least suspected that you would get any help from. The ones that you thought were friends, they shunned you, and not even a word from some of them. That was my experience, and I understand that's the way it was with a lot of the others too. I would think Mrs. Blake would have done it because of a personal relationship with the family, and she wouldn't speak much about it.

Riess: She bought a lot of Chinese scrolls and she had Asian art in her house. Maybe she really had an unusual sympathy with the Orient.

Domoto: Well, with that type of material, whoever she bought the material from, she probably got to know the dealer pretty well personally. Because of that connection, why, she may have bought more things that way.

Pricing and Bargaining

Riess: I've been reading about the beginning of Gump's, because I'm going to do an oral history with Richard Gump. A lot of the early history of Gump's talks about how A.L. Gump learned how to deal with the merchants in China, and how he convinced them to show him their best things. Was it the same when Mrs. Blake came out here? Would your father only show her something if she really looked like she knew her business? And do you feel the same way?

Domoto: No. See, my father's actual business experience was learned the hard way here in the United States. I think his interest in the person was more from the standpoint of whether they were interested in the plant itself. But the rest of the time, if they came in and were interested to buy, his idea was to sell on that basis.

Riess: He didn't hold back special things for special customers?

Domoto: No. I don't remember him doing that.

I'm not sure of the name now, but I think it was a Mr. [James K.] Moffitt, he always used to come out with a chauffeur. "When you go out to Domotos," he used to say, "if you go out with a chauffeur and a Pierce-Arrow, he's going to charge you one price, and if you go out with a Ford, it's another price." I think my dad used to do it that way. [laughs]

Funny thing, one day Mr. Moffitt came out in the chauffeur's car, driving it himself. My father, when he got through laughing, he said, "You don't fool me." [laughter] My father was laughing with Mr. Moffitt, and he says, "Okay." But as far as most of the prices, there'd be one price he'd quote and it would be the same price he'd quote to anybody else.

My father was a good psychologist, I think, in thinking back. The old Hellman Estate, which is now the Dunsmuir House, next to that was the place where the zoo is now, that used to be the Chabot place, I think--.

Riess: I don't know the family—Chabot is an Oakland name. Maybe you'll get it and can fill it in. Why don't you tell the story.

Domoto: There were a number of people that owned the place next to the Hellman's. Anyway, he married a chorus girl, and I remember them coming out to father's place to buy. She was very outspoken. I remember one day, everything my father'd quote, she'd always say, "That's too high. Make it cheaper." I remember going around sometimes behind them to tag some of the things they'd pick out, for my father.

When they got through my father told her, "You want to pay your price or my price?" She said, "My price." "You sure?" "Yes." "All right," he says, "here's your price; here's my price." His price was a lot lower because he had jacked the price up. [laughter] She didn't know the material. In other words, she was strictly on the basis of bargaining. In most of the old countries you go to, it's a bargaining basis. If you buy it at the first price, why, you're losing face.

After that when she used to come up and buy, she'd always tell him, "I want that. I want this, and I want that," and never a question about the price. She was a good psychologist too; having grown up the hard way, she knew that if you trust them you get the right plant.

Riess: Yes. Well, that's something that's difficult to figure out in some situations.

Domoto: If you don't know the material, and if you don't trust the person, don't buy from them. If you trust the person you go by what he says. If you don't like it, why, you just leave it.

Riess: For the Blakes, money was not an issue?

Domoto: I don't know that part of it. But I know as far as--we used to have what they called clean buyers and some buyers who always used to try to bargain. Of course, those that used to buy from my father wanted it to come out the same way. I said, "No, I don't do it that way. I quote one price, the wholesaler price, and the retailer price. It's the same whether you come today or tomorrow. If the plant gets bigger, it'll be more. If the plant gets poorer or out of date, you get lower." Whether they come in a Pierce-Arrow or anything else, it makes no difference."

Riess: Actually, because Miss Symmes was a professional, she might have a different price.

Domoto: Well, yes. See, there'd be a retail price. Landscape people would get, depending on the volume, mostly a 20 percent discount off of the retail. Or in some cases, if they were big volume they would

Domoto: get the regular wholesale price. But I think in most cases, until about the NRA days, along after the Depression when the government was trying to regulate prices and everything, until then most nurseries had what they called a volume deal, or else they'd each have an individual price. There were no definite price structures. You could go to one nursery and buy a gallon at one price, and you'd go to another nursery and it's another price.

Riess: What other local nurseries were there?

Domoto: The Sunset Nursery. It used to be in Piedmont. They supplied a lot of the smaller shrub type of material to the Piedmont area. Then Berkeley Hort got into shrubbery too. He was at first quite a bit of the perennial type of material. The Sunset was--their nursery was operated quite a bit—I think that was really, I'm not sure, but I have a feeling that they were operated by people who were maybe gardeners at first. Then Sandkeule and Carlson, the two partners, they became Sunset Nursery. They had a lot of the gardener trade there in Piedmont. I know the bedding plant people liked to supply them because they were always good pay. Then shrubwise, right in this area, my father's place. Then California Nursery, in Niles.

Riess: Over the years did they come out every year, Mrs. Blake and Miss Symmes? Now we're talking postwar and the '50s.

Domoto: Yes. At least once a year in the season, when things were in blossom, I used to see either one or the other.

Riess: Would they make an appointment ahead of time to say that they were coming?

Domoto: No. About the only one that ever made any appointments like that to come in was Mrs. Roth, and Andrew Welch in San Mateo. They were part of the Welch pineapple people. You know, the Hawaiian people. The Nichols family in Piedmont, they were part of the Hawaiian group too.

Riess: Well, are you tempted to go out and look at the Blake Garden now, after all these years?

Domoto: No, my interests are limited now. I have gone to some afterward. Like all the Japanese gardens, they always want me to look at them. Well, I look at them as plant material, not the design. I appreciate it. But my interest is not that way. My brother went into the design part, and he's doing landscaping back east now. But as far as the flower shows, there were days when I used to put in the displays and help.

Riess: So you're really interested in the individual plant.

Domoto: More on the plant side than the design. But since I like to draw and things like that, I guess I had a feeling for certain arrangements. I never tried to follow any design pattern or any set rule. If it pleased my eye, I was satisfied.

Transcriber: Catherine Woolf
Final Typist: Elizabeth Eshleman

Toichi Domoto Accessions to the Filoli Gardens*

<u>Received</u>	<u>Plant</u>
1977	<i>Styrax japonicum</i> (Japanese snowbell) by gate into Woodland Garden. Planted by L. Tolmach.
1977	<i>Prunus subhirtella</i> 'Pendula' (2) ungrafted seedling selections N. and S. of Wedding Place. Single pink. Planted by gardeners, Jim Bennett, L. Tolmach, John Simada.
1986 & 1987	Japanese Maple Collection. See two Filoli lists following [Japanese Maples 4/21/87].
1987	<i>Euonymus alata</i> 'Compacta.' Walled Garden.
1987	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> . Unusual dark ruby color. Center path through bulb slope East side Yew Allee.
1990	Tree Peonies. See Filoli map of Tree Peonies in the Cutting Garden, 10/24/90.
1992	Japanese Iris Collection (Komo Variety). About 1000 seedlings hand-pollinated by Toichi Domoto. Planted out into the vegetable gardens and into pots for the garden pools.
Before 1977	No records exists of Domoto Accessions prior to 1977, but in discussions with Toichi I feel that the following plants could have come from his nursery because he has asked me about their condition:
	<i>Osmanthus fragrans</i> 'aurantiacus.' Tree Peony Bed.
	<i>Wisteria</i> cultivars of <i>sinensis</i> , <i>floribunda</i> , and <i>venusta</i> . Throughout.
	<i>Camellias</i> -- <i>reticulata</i> , <i>japonica</i> , <i>sasanqua</i> . Throughout Walled Garden.
	Toichi told me that they supplied the cherries.

Kurume Azaleas--Ward's Ruby, Hinodegiri, Hino-crimson, etc. Mr. Ward was Mr. Domoto's business partner and worked with Tom Domoto importing the Kurume azaleas from Japan. Mr. Ward owned Cottage Gardens Nursery in Eureka, California.

Paeonia suffruticosa. Original tree peony found here and there in Walled Garden and Sunken Garden Area. Also the bed of old plants in SW corner of Cutting Garden.

Citrus reticulata 'Owari.' Dutch Garden Wall.

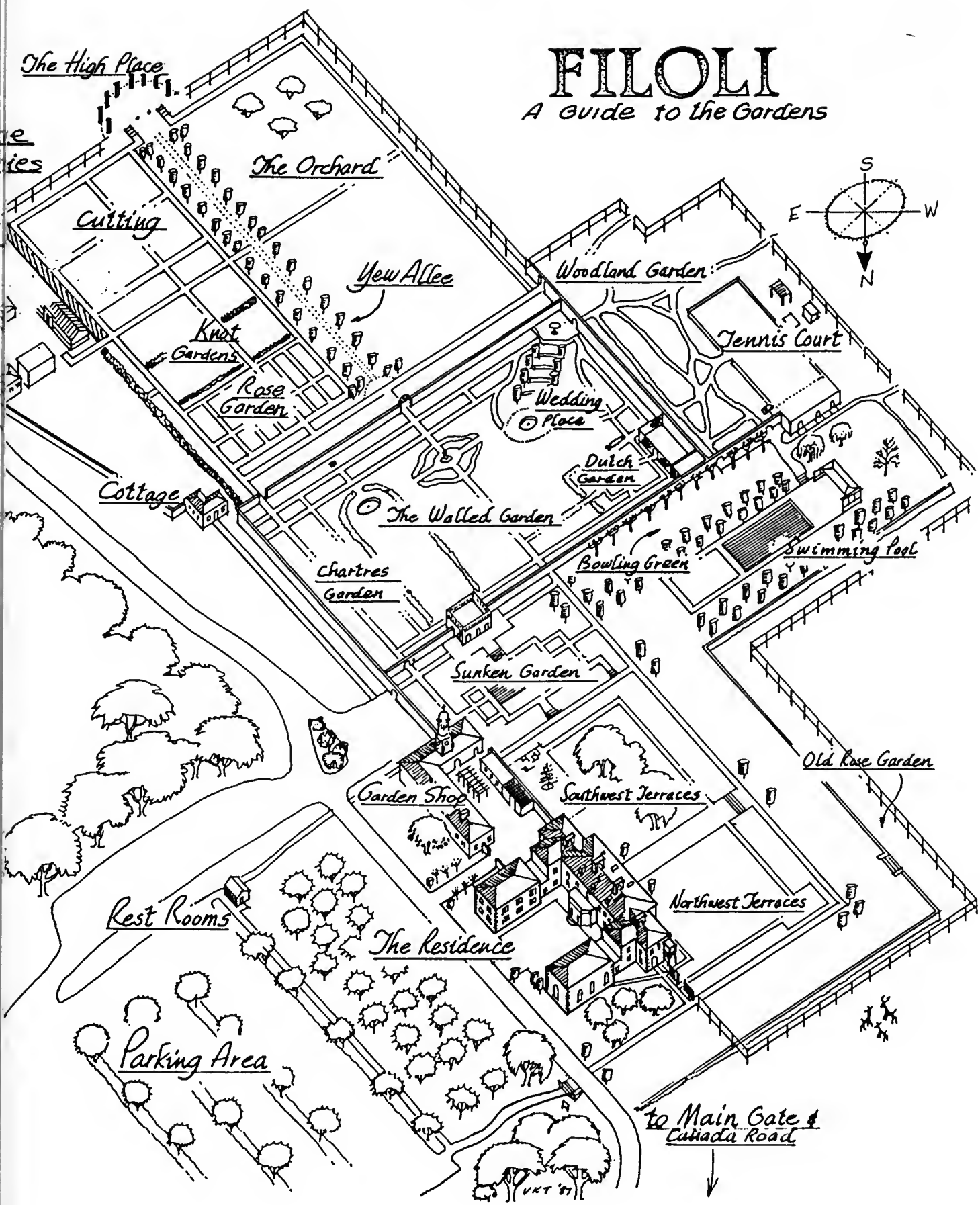
Laurus nobilis. Walled Garden by Teahouse.

Acer palmatum. Many cultivars. Throughout gardens.

*Information compiled by Lucy Tolmach, Garden Superintendent [1978-present] Filoli Center, Cañada Road, Woodside California 94062. [Handwritten notes typed by Regional Oral History Office.]

FILOLI

A Guide to the Gardens



F I L O L I TREE PEONIES IN THE CUTTING GARDEN

		A	B	C	D		
Laurel Hedge	Path	P	S	S	E	Path	
	36	X	X	⊗	⊗	36	4 D - Itoh hybrid, Yellow Emperor
	35	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗	35	5 B - Domoto hybrid
	34	⊗	⊗	X	⊗	34	5 D - Souvenir Maxim Cornu
	33	X	⊗	X	⊗	33	6 D - Lutea hybrid, Alice Harding
	32	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗	32	7 D - Argosy
	31	X	⊗	⊗	⊗	31	8 D - Stardust
	30	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗	30	9 D - Mine de Or
	Path					Path	
	29	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗	29	10 C - Domoto hybrid
	28	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗	28	10 D - Argosy
	27	⊗ _S	⊗	⊗ _S	⊗ _F	27	11 D - Yellow not identified
							12 B - Domoto hybrid
							14 B - Domoto hybrid
							16 D - Golden Era
							17 D - Age of Gold, Lutea hybrid
							18 D - Golden Mandarin, Lutea Hybrid



26	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	26	19 D - High Noon, Lutea hybrid
25	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	25	20 D - Marchioness, Lutea hybrid
24	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	24	21 B - Domoto hybrid
23	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	24	21 D - Zephyrus
22	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	24	22 D - Thunderbolt, Lutea hybrid
21	⊗ ⊗ FT ⊗	23	23 A - Domoto hybrid
20	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S E	23	23 C - Leda
19	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	23	23 D - Gauguin
18	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	21	24 A - Domoto hybrid
17	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	21	24 B - Domoto hybrid
16	Sh ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	20	25 A - Domoto hybrid
15	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	19	28 A - Domoto hybrid
14	⊗ ⊗ FT ⊗	18	29 C - Domoto hybrid
13	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	17	31 C - Domoto hybrid
12	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ F	All unidentified plants (except 11 D) are unnamed Domoto seedlings	
11	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
10	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S	<u>Symbols used in Plot Plan:</u> X - Space available ⊗ - Plant O - Space not usable S - Sprinkler Head F - Faucet E - Electric Outlet FT - Fruit Tree Sh - Shrub	
9	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
8	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
7	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S		
6	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
5	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
4	⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S ⊗ _S		
3	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		

4/21/87

JAPANESE MAPLES

Japanese Maples received from T. Domoto.

Reference: "Japanese Maples" by J. D. Vertrees, and the page numbers listed herein are referring to that book.

Plant numbers are from the Master List of plants received.

Plant No.		Reference Page
1	Acer griseum, Paper Bark Maple	152
2	Acer griseum, Paper Bark Maple	152
3	Acer palmatum XXXXXX ^{XXX} 'Matsu kaze'	80
4	Acer palmatum 'Tatsuta gawa'	60
5	Acer - unknown S-79	
6	Acer palmatum linearilobum 'Atrolineare'	89

8	Acer palmatum	Scolopendrifolium	
9	Acer palmatum	'Scolopendrifolium'	91
13	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
14	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
15	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
16	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
17	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
18	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
19	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
20	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
21	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
22	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
23	Acer palmatum	'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128
25	Acer palmatum	'Beni kagami'	76
26	Acer palmatum	'Beni kagami'	76
27	Acer palmatum	'Orido nishiki'	115
28	Acer palmatum	'Orido nishiki'	115
29	Acer palmatum	'Orido nishiki'	115
30	Acer palmatum	'Orido nishiki'	115

- 1 -

<u>Plant No.</u>		<u>Reference Page</u>
31	Acer palmatum 'Okushimo'	126
32	Acer palmatum linearilobum	89
33	Acer palmatum 'Matsugae'	113
34	Acer palmatum 'Oshu beni'	56
36	Acer palmatum 'Shishigashira'	129
37	Acer palmatum dissectum atropurpureum 'Ever Red'	65
38	Acer palmatum dissectum atropurpureum, Red Lace Leaf Maple	64
39	Acer palmatum dissectum 'Viridis'	74
40	Acer palmatum dissectum 'Waterfall'	74
41	Acer palmatum 'Sango kaku'	127
42	Acer japonicum f. aconitifolium, Fern Leaf Maple	135
43	Acer palmatum 'Osakazuki'	55
44	Acer palmatum 'Chishio'	119
45	Acer palmatum 榎葉 榎 'Aoyagi'	47
48	Acer palmatum 'Sectens'	89

49	Acer - unknown - red, large leaf	
50	Acer palmatum 'Tatsuta gawa'	60
51	Acer palmatum 'Chishio'	119
52	Acer palmatum 'Seigai' 'Bonfire'	128

4/21/87

JAPANESE MAPLES

Location of Japanese Maples received from T. Domoto.

45 Maples received 2/14/86, and all planted in the Gardens in March, 1987.

Locations are on "Plant Guide for Filoli Gardens".
Plant numbers refer to Master List of Maples received.

Plant No.

- A. Entrance Courtyard and Driveway.
- A.1 North Side of Courtyard.
- A.1, page 1 22 North of Portico (already on your list)
- A.1, page 1 19 Back in the corner (already on your list)
- A.1, page 1 20 Just East of Ballroom steps
- A.2 South Side of Courtyard.
- A.2, page 2 21 South of portico (already on your list)
- A.2, page 2 23 Under servants' wing (already on your list)
- B. Area North of House.
- B.1 Against House
- B.1, page 6 52 Just West of Handicap Ramp
- B.2 North Walk from Driveway to North Terrace Steps.
- B.2, page 6 16 Daphne Walk
- 21 (should be 17) Daphne Walk
- 18 Daphne Walk
- B.2, page 7 14 Daphne Walk
- 13 Daphne Walk
- B.2, page 9 15 Under Iron Balcony
- H. Western Walled Garden.
- H.5.5, page 6 4
- 38

I. Woodland Garden.

I.3, Bed 2 43

I.4, Bed 3 25

26

27

28

29

30

33

J. Pool Pavilion Area.

J.3 Behind Pool Pavilion.

J.3, page 2 41 By Rhododendron 'Cary Ann'

On J.3, page 3, there are 2 Japanese Maples *Acer palmatum* 'Sangokaku'. These were planted last year and are not from Domoto. One is already on your plant list.

J.4.1 In Shade North of Yews.

J.4.1, page 8 1 Near Philadelphus

2 Near English Holly

K. South Side of Walled Garden to Beginning of Chartres.

K.2, page 2 37

K.8, page 4 9

L. Entrance to and Area West of Yew Allee.

L.5, page 6 3 Hydrangea Bed, South of Path

5 Hydrangea Bed, South of Path

44 North of Path

45 Hydrangea Bed, South of Path

51 North of Path

O. High Place.

O.1, page 11 50

O.2, page 11 34

49

Q. Chartres Cathedral Window Garden.

Q.1.1, page 1 8

R. East of Tea House.

R, page 5 36 By gate to Green Truck area

S. South of Carriage House.

S.1, page 1 6 East side of path

7 West side of path

32 East side of path

Note: Plant #48 has not yet been placed in the gardens, but is in a tub by Area #2 tool shed.

YOUR ORDER NO. _____

OUR ORDER NO. _____

26521 WHITMAN STREET
(Off Sorenson Road)**TOICHI DOMOTO**

"The Home of Distinctive Plants"

PHONE 582-9550

HAYWARD, CALIF. 2-14 1986SOLD TO Filoli

ADDRESS _____

SHIP TO _____

ADDRESS _____

TERMS		HOW SHIP		WHEN SHIP	
Donation		willkerson			
QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT		
2	Acer Griseum				
"	Matsu Kaze				
"	Tatsutagawa				
"	S 79				
2	may Sept Linear				
5	date Sept lobum				Scalopendri Sodium
12	" Seigai "Bontire				
2	" Beni Kagami				
4	" Orido Nishiki				
	OKi shimo				
	Linear lobum				
	Matsu gai				
	Mshu beni				

YOUR ORDER NO. _____

OUR ORDER NO. _____

26521 WHITMAN STREET
(Off Sorenson Road)**TOICHI DOMOTO**

"The Home of Distinctive Plants"

PHONE 582-9550

HAYWARD, CALIF. _____ 19 _____

SOLD TO Filoli

ADDRESS _____

SHIP TO #2

ADDRESS _____

TERMS		HOW SHIP		WHEN SHIP	
QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT		
	Acer. dis. Ever Red				

355

"

"

Viridis

"

"

Waterfall

Sango Kaku

Fern leaf

Osaka zuki

2

chi shio

1

Wpq

Cherry

RECEIVED
BY

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HORTICULTURE, BOTANY, AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The following interviews related to landscape architecture, garden design, horticulture, and botany have been completed by the Regional Oral History Office. Through tape recorded autobiographical interviews with scholars and professionals in these fields, individuals working in a wide range of gardens and arboreta, and members of native plant conservation groups, we are documenting over a half-century of growth and change in wild and cultivated California and the West. The interviews, transcribed, indexed, and bound, may be ordered at cost for deposit in research libraries.

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Volume II: Interviews with Maggie Baylis, Elizabeth Roberts Church, Robert Glasner, Grace Hall, Lawrence Halprin, Proctor Mellquist, Everitt Miller, Harry Sanders, Lou Schenone, Jack Stafford, Goodwin Steinberg, and Jack Wagstaff.

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